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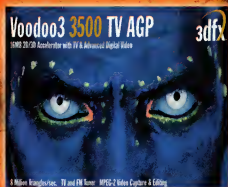


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THE LATEST LARA

Is Lara all washed up? Pages of post-its sacrificed their lives for our exclusive and exhaustive preview of Lara and her latest adventure



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QUAKE III: THE FINAL CHAPTER

Our seemingly never-ending feature on the action game to end all action games finally concludes with a hands-on look at *Quake III's* bots, all-new levels, and player models



37

PCXL MAKEOVER

You think Ricki Lake would try to change her guests' image by giving them an AMD Athlon 600 and a mini-refrigerator for beer? Probably not, but we sure would. Find out how a "Dawson's Creek" loser becomes a PCXL winner



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We put the 600Mhz Athlon through its paces, then asked two very important questions: Is there a woman who sweats beer and can NVIDIA conquer all with the GeForce 256?



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Does the tenth anniversary of *John Madden Football* bring us the best one yet in *Madden 2000*? And, find out if Microsoft knows basketball as well as it knows profit margins



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We play host to 12 game-playin' readers at our very own *Diablo II* beta test, where Blizzard treated them to fine wine and continental cuisine (translation — beer and pizza)



STRATEGY

122

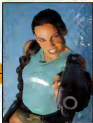
Besides the ability to arrive at work five hours late, miss deadlines, and talk about pants, Ed Lee's also pretty good at *Tiberian Sun*. See what you can learn from him



ROLLING X-TRA

129

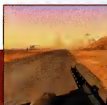
Rolling Stone has sold out but our version still delivers the goods with *Q*Bert: Behind the Game*, PCXL P.I., and GameTour: What Really Happens When a Game Hits the Road



ON THE COVER

Lara Croft model Lara Weller flew all the way over from jolly old England to spend an afternoon in an ice-cold pool while we drank beer and said helpful things like, "You must be cold." Photography by Jack Hutchison, make-up by Lara's own lovely specialist Ruth, and beer by Mike

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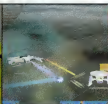
76 INDIANA JONES

Can an Indiana Jones license make a Tomb Raider-style game fun?



88 DRAKAN

Fly on dragons! Explore giant worlds! Skate at the cleavage of another busty female lead character!



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Can Starfleet shed the war game shackles of its somewhat boring past?



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Find out if this Myth-style RTS delivers or takes a big steaming dump



96 REVOLT

We broke all of our RC cars as a kid. This game gives us a chance to learn how to drive them



97 MOB RULE

We love the graphics and dig the idea, but is the painful micromanagement worth your time?



102 RITES OF WAR

We dunno. PC Gamer and some guy with a beard said it was good. Check it out right here



103 BRAVEHEART

Braveheart license + strategy game = Good Things, Right? You maniac! You blew it all to hell!



106 INDEPENDENCE WAR: DELUXE

If you don't already have this puppy, drop a measly \$30 on this bad boy



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Even though it's time to give thanks, Mike Santoro decides to complain, rant, and talk turkey about the things he hates. If this guy were a pilgrim, he'd have fringed all the Indians during dinner

FIRST PERSON 148

Saga's brand new Dreamcast hits the market, worrying PC players with its shiny new graphics. Need we worry, or is this another 32X?

THE DISCS



16

Notice the "s" after the word "disc." It is plural and isn't one of our many types. We have two discs, just like The Artist formerly known as the artist formerly known as Prince's Sign Of The Times LP — but TAFKATKAP didn't have 32 games and 100 giant babe pictures, did he?



CELEBRITIES LIKELY TO SUE US FOR THIS ISSUE OF PCXL

Pamela Lee for breach of beach balls, Rosie O'Donnell for pointing out the obvious, Gary Coleman because he's only a security guard now, O'Jert for exposing the hideous truth, Jon Ryan for putting her on our cover, Baby Jessica for trying to put her back in the well, Ron Jeremy for naming his "peg," Delta Burke for putting her new line of plus-sized clothes in a bad light, Sally Field for Absence Of Malice (oh wait, that's the Great Injustices of the Academy Awards list), the IMC for not "thinking different," Roseanne Roseannadanna for stealing her bit, Kathy Lee for jumping on the crowded bandwagon



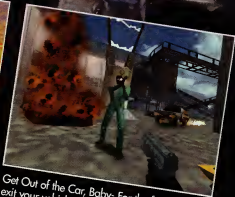
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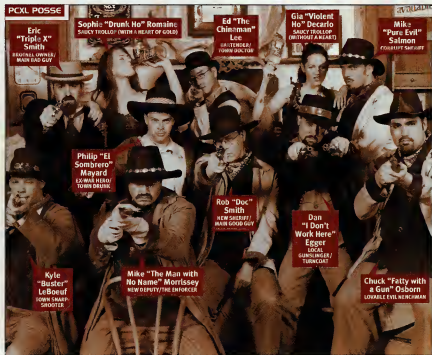
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Every single issue of PCOL contains one advertisement that just ain't right. Find the faux ad and send it in to innocool@pcol.com to be eligible for *fabulous* prizes (all correct entries will be drawn at random when we feel like it).

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MIKE SALMON, *Editor in Chief*



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The photo to the left was taken just before a horrible shooting spree broke out at Paramount's Great America, which would later be blamed on violent computer games. Fortunately all the gunmen were so drunk by the time the shooting began, nobody was hurt. The victim is actually war "B" Sonobates" who let his head on the table.

Mike's letter was written while stressed about marriage and during "that time of the month" **PC ACCELERATOR** November 1999

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Our disc comes with a scrolling interface, and is operated by moving the mouse over the screen. The bar on the left can also be used. Click (left) on the mouse to select items and click (left) again (on the image) to return to the previous screen. If you've ever installed a game, the rest is easy.

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- Q:** Are all men from the future loud-mouthed braggarts?
- A:** Nope, just me baby, just me.
- Q:** I'll swallow your soul!
- A:** Come get some.
- Q:** You once found me beautiful.
- A:** Honey, you got reaaaaa ugly.
- Q:** Who wants some? Who wants a little? You want some? You want a little?

DISC

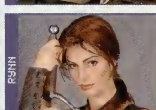


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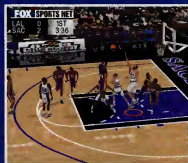
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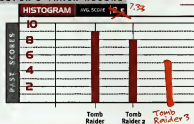
THE LAST «

Repetition?

Like most red-blooded male gamers, we love (i.e. lust after) Lara Croft. That sexy accent and those big guns (not to be confused with Kristin Big-guns, last month's hot cover model) enthralled us in the first and even the second *Tomb Raider* game. But by the time *Tomb Raider III* made it out, we'd had just about enough. The same old engine, same stories, same puzzles ... it was all a bit boring. So when we first heard about *Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation* we were (and still are to a large degree) very skeptical.

So why did we put her on our cover? Because she is hot (and you like looking at hot girls, don't you?), and because people want (and deserve) to know the truth about *The Last Revelation* (did we mention that the model is hot?). While you're likely to hear other candy-coated coverage saying such lifeless drivel as, "If you liked *TRIII* then you're sure to love *TRTLR*," PCXL isn't afraid to tell you the whole truth. In the next two pages we've taken the same preview template we used for *Tomb Raider III* and made all the necessary adjustments and tweaks to use it for *Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation* (kinda like what Core and Eidos have been doing to *TR* since the original). But there is some hope. The day before we shipped this issue, we received a newer version of *TRTLR* and some of the promised new gameplay has been implemented. Journey with us to see if this is really Lara's last stand, or if the series is actually showing signs of life ...

DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



The last Revelation

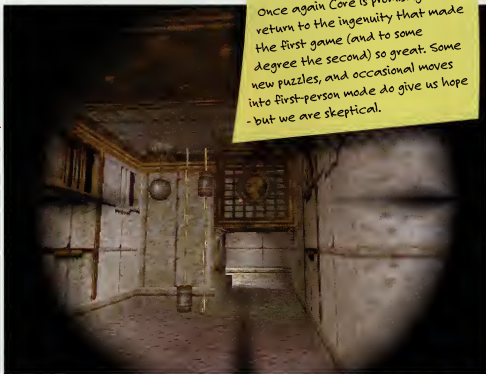
Tomb Raider 3

Is more of the same enough?

Still

Among the glamour and glitz of an array of 3D engines showcased at E3, Lara's latest adventure didn't really stand out. The three-year-old graphics engine has been tweaked, but the effects and environments aren't even in the same league as other third-person games like *Max Payne* and *Hercules II*. However, no other game in development has *Tomb Raider 3*'s main asset: the busy adventurer we all know as Lara Croft. She is undoubtedly the biggest star in the game industry and has helped expand the market with her unreal body and adventurous gameplay.

Complaints poured in that *TR2* was way too similar to the original, but that didn't stop millions of gamers from buying and playing the hell out of the game. Many in the industry have been saying that *Tomb Raider* is tired, old, and doesn't stand a chance against



① The action/adventure genre that *Tomb Raider* created is finally starting to produce better games, as *Shadow Man* was the first not to suck ass. Once again Core is promising a return to the ingenuity that made the first game (and to some degree the second) so great. Some new puzzles, and occasional moves into first-person mode do give us hope - but we are skeptical.

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Core Design
PUBLISHER → Eidos
RELEASE DATE → November '99
3D SUPPORT → Direct3D (patches for Glide also in store)

INTEREST GAUGE

CLUTTERED INTERESTED (mid) EXCITED (high)

THE HYPE

The latest *Tomb Raider* adventure promises a revamped engine, better AI, new vehicles, and new moves.

THE HURDLE

Often gamers will accept sequels that are more of the same, but for a third installment they expect something special.

THE HIT

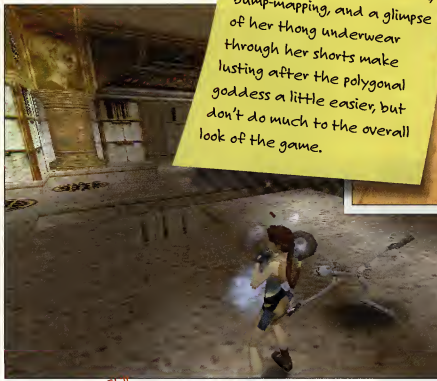
TR's technology is no longer up-to-par with other 3D action games on the PC, but gameplay and Lara will be enough.

The binoculars add much-needed variety to the game and the puzzles within.



New lighting effects and scripted events add to the interactive movie approach of the game.

② Skin effects on Lara, bump-mapping, and a glimpse of her thong underwear through her shorts make lustering after the polygonal goddess a little easier, but don't do much to the overall look of the game.



Mmmm ... Lara. She's so cute when she's mad.



Check out the thong and the untitard ... rrrrooooo! Wait, she's not real, right?

► the new wave of games. One key ingredient they're forgetting is that gameplay, not graphics, is what makes a great game. Despite the many efforts to make Tomb Raider, no game delivers a better cinematic feel or sprawling adventure. Sure the battle scenes in TR are almost laughable, but the ingenious puzzles, dramatic environments, and well-crafted levels are the real reason people love the first two incarnations.

Rather than spending a year developing a new engine, Core has focused on creating a new, more interactive world for Lara to explore. TR3 takes Lara to the only in the familiar (though exotic) locale of Antartica, India, a tropical rainforest, and the London. A new landscape system incorporating triangles, improved texture palettes, transparencies, and other particle effects promises to liven up the graphics. Other cosmetic enhancements such as snow, wind, rain, foot-

steps in the snow, blowing leaves, fog, darkness, and even some new duds for Lara are likely to alter the environment enough so it seems like a whole new game.

What wasn't evident in the early version I saw were upgrades in gameplay. Core Design promises new moves, new vehicles, and new puzzles that, if pulled off, could once again make Lara the queen of adventure. For example, in the London level Lara slips into a tight black cat suit and has to sneak around the city, rather than charge around in her usual sun-blasting style. The new, healthy game play is in the "series" AI, which was obnoxious in previous TR games. Core assure us that its programmers have spent a great deal of time and energy to wisen up the baddies, but we'll wait to see on that. The vehicles that debuted in Tomb Raider 2 are now going to be a more integral part of the gameplay, with a new vehicle for each world. Vehicles thus far: a jeep, a

scooter, a keep chase motorcycle, a motorbike, and a motorcycle. And are the most interesting of the bunch, a made-of-pottery motorcycle. New moves including knocking down doors, crawling, rope swinging, and wall jumping give Lara more tools for trekking around the terrain levels and round out the new features.

Additions aside, Tomb Raider 3 is likely to be more of the same, which to some ain't so bad.

— MIKE SALMON has the Nude Raider website at his startup page.*

had until Elad's shut it down

had until Elad's shut it down

had until Elad's shut it down

had until Elad's shut it down



Otherworldly beasts and their vile traps are certain to be tougher this time around.

As always, smooth particle effects and transparencies showcase Lara's ass.

THE REAL LARA

With Paramount's upcoming production on Tomb Raider: The Movie, we thought this would be a good opportunity to test out some candidates on the casting couch.

ELIZABETH HURLEY

- She's got the accent, height, and looks
- Going to need a pack of Marl and some toughening up

SEAN MORRIS

- Like Lara, horny men — as opposed to genetics — created her body
- The accent is key, and her face could use some more work

CATHERINE ZETA JONES

- Hot, Welsh and a body that doesn't quit

—stalling



③ The new inventory system allows Lara to combine objects like a laser sight and a revolver, which then takes you a first-person/sniper mode where you can blow the heads of skeletons or shoot far off objects to complete a puzzle. The promise of no more damn block pushing puzzles or 50 mile runs to a switch seem to have been kept — thank God.



Lara just won't give up that Banana Republic circa 1983 fashion statement. — still



THIS JUST IN WHAT'S NEW

As our jaded journalistic asses were putting this feature to bed, a new version of *TRTLR* arrived and actually showed some of the new features. I wouldn't call any of them groundbreaking, but combined with a good story, it could actually spell some fresh impetus in a *Tomb Raider* game. Additionally, the

occasional switches into first-person mode show what direction the game is moving in the future. Core envisions a seamless transition from third-person to first-person to take advantage of the benefits of both. If the next game has a new engine (and it will) then this sounds very intriguing.

Binoculars

WHAT IT DOES → Allows Lara to check out far-away hieroglyphics to solve a puzzle or just to see what enemies lie ahead
EFFECT → Very cool. It makes the world seem much more alive and puts the player further into the game



Rope Climb

WHAT IT DOES → Allows Lara to move more like a real human
EFFECT → Minimal. But it gives level designers more options when creating the tombs



Bump-mapping, skinning, engine tweaks

WHAT IT DOES → Makes the game look only slightly better than *TRIII*
EFFECT → None, really. The game still looks pretty shoddy, especially compared to the likes of *Shadow Mon* and *Soldier Of Fortune*

No Load

WHAT IT DOES → Continuous uninterrupted gameplay from start to finish
EFFECT → Pretty good, if they can pull it off. We haven't seen this one working just yet



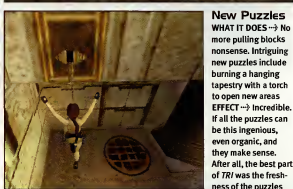
Inventory System

WHAT IT DOES → Allows Lara to combine features like a laser sight, flashlight, etc., with various guns
EFFECT → Pretty cool, especially the laser sight, which now makes the fighting much, much better



New Puzzles

WHAT IT DOES → No more pulling blocks nonsense. Intriguing new puzzles include burning a hanging tapestry with a torch to open new areas
EFFECT → Incredible. If all the puzzles can be this ingenious, even organic, and they make sense. After all, the best part of *TRI* was the freshness of the puzzles



THE ANSWERS

As scientific as ever, PCIL has gathered a cross section of American society to give you the straight answers on *Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation*

THE PANEL

Mike Salomon (MS) — Critical Journalist
Timmy Johnson (TJ) — Geely fanboy
Magic 8-Ball (8) — As himself

Q: Is it gonna be as bad as *Tomb Raider III*?

MS → No, it should be better — but that's not saying much

TJ → It's gonna rock, you can see Lara's thigh — mmm... Lara

8 → It is too early to tell

Q: Are the graphics any better?

MS → Yes, but just barely.

TJ → Waaaaa better dude, you can see Lara's thigh — mmm... thigh — now that's a real revelation!

8 → Ask me again later

Q: If I've played any other *Tomb Raider* game, then would I need to play this one, and why?

MS → Not unless you really, really enjoyed the first couple *TRs*. The new stuff could be quite cool if they actually get it right

TJ → Hell yeah, Lara has some new vehicles, new moves, and a thigh — mmm... moves

8 → Maybe

Q: Is the game any fun at all?

MS → It is too early to tell

TJ → It's dope. She runs around and shoots shit in her thigh — mmm... 8 → I say NO

Q: Why should I buy this game?

MS → Because it is still the best action/adventure game on the PC and she is in a thigh — mmm...

TJ → Cur' you're supposed to mindlessly buy all the games, you 'ard

8 → The answer is not clear

LARA IN THE FLESH

It was a lovely sunny afternoon in Burlingame, California, and we had Lara Croft in an ice cold swimming pool drinking Corona — ahh, life is good. We decided that keeping a day like this to ourselves would be selfish, so here are some of the pictures of that day's events (Not shown in pictures: Mike Salmon, Kyle LeBoeuf, and Eric Smith, drinking mad amounts of Corona, getting stupidly sunburned, and making lewd comments)



A TALE OF TWO SEQUELS

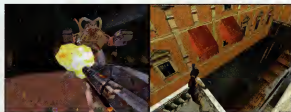
The original *Tomb Raider* and the original *Quake* debuted near the same time and each has spawned several sequels. While *Id* has been radically upgrading the technology in each new version of *Quake*, Core has just given gamers more of the same. The theory at Core is that gamers love *Tomb Raider* and they want more, while at *id* they wouldn't dream of releasing a game on a four-year-old engine. Take a quick look at the tale of two sequels.



QUAKE I

TOMB RAIDER I

Comparison: Both games featured stunning new graphics engines and *Tomb Raider* actually created a totally new gaming experience. Advantage: *Tomb Raider*



QUAKE II

TOMB RAIDER II

Comparison: What *Quake II* lacked in single-player gameplay it more than made up for in technological advancement and multiplayer perfection. *TRII* was just more of the same, but with vehicles. Advantage: *Quake II*



QUAKE III

TOMB RAIDER III

Comparison: State of the art technology vs. a three-year-old engine and gameplay. Giant advantage: *Quake III*

THEN AND NOW...

A lot happened since the original *Tomb Raider*. Here is a brief look at 1995 vs. 1999

1995

Tomb Raider was released to critical and commercial success

1999

Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation released on same engine to commercial success and critical dismay

Our President was feeling up young women

Still feeling them up, but now he gets caught

Hootie & The Blowfish were the hot new artist

N'sync is the hot new artist

Jerry Garcia, Easy E., and Lana Turner died

Allan Funt, Norman Fell, JFK Jr. died

Rob was in England

Rob wishes he was in England

Forrest Gump was the "hot" movie

Bubba Gump's is a "hot" food chain

Voodoo3 launched

Voodoo3 nearly obsolete

Newt Gingrich Man Of The Year

People still laughing about Newt Gingrich being Man Of The Year

Oliver Stone released a conspiracy theory movie

Oliver Stone believes conspiracy ruined ticket sales to conspiracy theory movie

Netscape starts the tech stock madness

Original Netscape employees each buy a Ferrari and date supermodels

Daikafana begins development

Daikafana still in development

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PART 3

IN *III* WE TRUST

WHEN IT'S [FINALLY] DONE,
IT'S GONNA BE EVERYTHING IT WAS INTENDED TO BE ...

By the time *Quake III Arena* ships (our guess around mid-November) to a frenzied hardcore audience, it will have garnered more press attention, musings, conjecture, false rumor, and simple, pure, unadulterated hype than any other game this year. The cynical gaming press loathes marketing hype, preferring to distance themselves from the bandwagon with vacant detachment. But having witnessed firsthand the latter stages of its development, it's evident that *Quake III Arena* is moving out of its hardcore niche. By sponsoring high profile (though absolutely hardcore) events like QuakeCon, and with the big black *Quake* bus currently touring 20 locations from shopping malls to college campuses, Id

is pushing *Q3A* into the mainstream. It's a focus of the single-player game design and of the marketing direction. As a result, it has the potential and quality to be a mammoth hit beyond its core audience.

We've played some of the new levels in their near-final state (complete with incredible new decorative textures). We've caused mass destruction with the full complement of weapons, and watched the newest models in action. And, we unabashedly say that not only will *Quake III Arena* be the definitive deathmatching experience, it's also going to break barriers into the mainstream ... violence and all.

BY ROB SMITH

LEVELS OF EXPERIENCE

Just three of the 24 levels (yes, that's the final number) have been played thus far between the test demos. One more — Paul Jaquays' Brimstone Abbey — will be released as part of the official demo (with an OEM version possibly adding another level for whichever hardware part-

ners are signed to include it in their software bundle). This quartet (Q3Test1, Q3Test2, and Q3Tourney, and Brimstone Abbey) forms a trial "tier." The tier system is a new method that id has devised to organize the single player game progression. All 24 levels will be separated into six tiers, consisting of three general

maps of varying sizes and formats, supporting anything from three to eight players and a single one-on-one tourney map for a tense finale against a boss-style opponent. Lead level designer Tim Willits cordially explained to PCXL that "The number of bots you face on any given map is based on the map size. The computer will select more difficult bots based on your ranking, but the total number of bots won't change."

all around the level, teleporters, and even rocket-jump points.

Bounce pads (as witnessed in the two Q3Test maps) have a significant presence — their inclusion at the expense of the traditional *Quake II*-style elevators were conceived as a way to speed up gameplay. "Elevators are less dynamic in an action game than a bounce point that throws the player through the air. They make the levels faster and more fun," Willits explained.

To give you an idea of how difficult the currently available maps are considered, Willits revealed that the Q3Test1 map will be part of tier two (relatively easy) while Q3Test2 is featured in tier six (one of the hardest). Similarly, the straightforward design of the released tourney map places it as the final challenge in tier two.

One Willits mid-range level, Hero's Keep (these names may drop by the wayside as the standardized naming convention of TierX MapY is implemented), has a fairly simple, symmetrical design with two opposing ends housing power-ups and weapons. In the middle, three bridges pass each other over a really deep pit (so deep I had time to spit out a string of vile profanities, then hit the respawn, and still hadn't hit the bottom). The symmetrical layout belies the depth of strategy that can be employed. Mixing claustrophobic end rooms with wide-open middle portions, there's a subtle balance between weapon choice — rocket for close quarters and railgun in the open. But a well-aimed rocket to the ground can send an opponent flying off the bridges and inflict as much damage to the leader board as a perfect shot to the face.

Christian Antkow's Space Chamber level (tier five) features a number of platforms that move up and down ad infinitum, linked by a confusing maze of walls. By this stage you need to exhibit a spatial awareness covering all 360 degrees — watching for railgun snipers at the highest point. This high ground is also where a spawn point has been placed, thus posing a permanent poten-

"WITH EACH GAME WE GET BETTER AT [LEVEL DESIGN]. WE'RE STILL LEARNING, BUT WE'RE LEARNING WHAT REALLY WORKS." — TIM WILLITS, ID LEAD LEVEL DESIGNER



Brimstone Abbey is inspired by a gothic cathedral style, but also includes outdoor areas to balance the weapon placement and movement flow.

TIER 4 IS STRUCTURED LIKE THIS:

- Map 1 is a 5-player map (you plus four bots)
- Map 2 is an 8-player map
- Map 3 is a 3-player map
- Tourney map, as with all tourney maps, is 2-player

Finally, the single-player game has a structure. The vague concept of a console beat-em-up ladder of progression has been given a fresh coat of paint. Unfortunately, since this concept is a late addition, the levels in each tier don't follow any particular theme or format in design. Essentially, they are divided by difficulty — the first tier levels are very flat, with simple ramps and staircases and require the most cursory motor skills to navigate. With each successive tier, new elements are added — bounce pads, wide open spaces requiring the ability to look

tial threat to camping scumbag bastards hanging out up there.

Partnering The Longest Yard (Q3Test2) in tier six, Antkow's Place of Many Deaths, focuses on your ability to move in constricted corridors, while staying aware of potential enemies above and below you, or flying through the air on one of the many bounce pads. Likewise, another high tier open level features an array of bounce pads at different angles, supplying numerous escape routes, and requiring a very steady railgun aim to pick someone out of midair, or perfect momentum judgement to peg a target with the rocket as he lands.

But great design isn't always about cunning level shaping, effective architectural use of the curved surfaces, or adding lava, slime, and water (one of Paul Jaquay's favorites for its ability to change the pace of a level).

One simple tourney map has the main area shrouded in a thick yellow fog. Finding the steps above the fog line to the quad power-up location is only half the battle. Stealth is vital in this *Running Man*-esque setup, as are

pure adrenaline-fueled twitch reactions when your opponent appears in the mist, racing for the centrally-located rocket launcher.

Other levels use elements of existing maps as a basis for their construction. One Paul Jaquay's level is inspired by, of all things, the first map of *Doom* 2. While the textures and detail render it virtually unrecognizable from its predecessor, veterans of the older games will spot some of the basic construction. But this in no way suggests that the Q3A levels are rehashes of old concepts. Sure, you may recognize some ideas, but that's because fundamentally sound ideas never die.

Remember that all you've witnessed so far with this game is one-eighth of the final level count. Even now, the artists are tweaking textures, adding eye candy, and generally beautifying the whole shebang — not necessarily for beauties' sake, but to make an all-round more impressive level.

With the structure firmly in place, the final tweaking of these levels is finally complete. Now it's up to the bots to come in and do their bit.

► p. 32



Rage Against the Machine, Trent Reznor, and DJ Sasha are all possible artists preparing to contribute to soundtrack scores for the final game.



Orbb is one of Paul Steed's favorite models. Its weird shape doesn't affect its movement, or its ability to take a quick swim. (Note the plasma gun aiming at potential foes.)

CTF TAKING SHAPE

Zoid's nearly done with the code and eight CTF-specific maps will ship with the game. CTF will be the only teamplay option (along with team deathmatch) with the possible Assault and Powerball variants ditched "to keep it simple."

A couple of CTF maps feature the nearest thing to moving geometry in Q3A. A Paul Jaquays level (CTF2) has a bridge (with power-up on top) leading to one base, with a small room overlooking the bridge. Flick one switch in the room and the bridge retracts (though the chase can be crossed with a perfectly timed and placed rocket-jump), and flick another to set off a trap that spews grenades in all directions for a few seconds. This last trap is also used in another level, whereby a switch on the ceiling must be shot to open a cell holding the quad power. From within the cell, the grenade trap can cause havoc to any pursuing forces that may appear.

New information will be on screen to help coordinate teamwork without the need for voice communication (which won't be supported). You'll be able to see each of your team members' status through a quick reference line, i.e., "X is in the base/tunnel/enemy base." This line also includes a tiny icon for the weapon they're carrying and a number representing the amount of ammo they

have (so defenders can warn attackers they're running low while glory-seekers are in the midst of a firefight). Also, only the flag captures will score — all kill details have been nixed in teamplay in favor of promoting the prime objective. Bots will also take and issue simple orders. A "visor guard flag" will get a favorable response. On the other hand, "Visor get your bony ass over here and guard my retreat you scrawny little bastard" probably won't.



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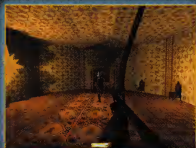


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SLAP ON THE BOT

It's all fun and games until someone loses an eye. Those reflective textures are amazing.



No, really I mean it! There's a guy with a gun behind you.



Yep, rockets smoke, Orbs jump, and we all hate deadlines.

Nobody was expecting Id's first attempt at AI bots to be easy. Let's face it, the enemy AI in *Quake* and *Quake II* was so dumb, it couldn't have passed a college exam even if it had the help bequeathed a 300-pound lineman who can run the 40 in 4.7. Bot programmer John Cash explained that changes to the engine in the early months rendered most of the AI work obsolete, so it wasn't until the core technology was essentially finished that the hardcore work could begin.

This delay has been a small blessing for gamers, as John Carmack told us, "The engine will actually be more polished than it needs to be, as I'm able to spend time making things better."

As for the actual bots themselves, they'll essentially be complete by the release of the second test (which should be out by the time you read this). Dumbing them down from their perfect computer AI is still the most difficult issue. They will use sound cues from power-up pick-ups as real players will, but their knowledge comes from the random chance that they "realize" where that sound came from, and so will act upon it. Of course, this action will be virtually instantaneous.

While we were told that the bots wouldn't rocket-jump, they now will. However, they won't bounce like mad hatters all over the level, leaving the RJ-ing decision to a tag defining the benefit of doing the rocket-jump as "really good." Hence, they'll jump for the red armor or mega health, but won't do it just to grab an armor shard.

In terms of difficulty, the 30 bots will run the gamut, ranging from Egger-esque dumb, up to what a *Quake*Con finalist described as "challenging." They'll also talk smack from a range of set options depending on certain events. Bizarrely, the bots won't know which players in a

game are bots, so they'll happily rag on each other, as well as respond to whatever taunting you wish to throw a computerized gimmick. We're pretty excited about this particular aspect, and think there should be a contest to spot which Id staffer came up with which particular bot insult. Answers on a postcard ...

ALL TWEAK

The *Quake III* race has headed into the final furlong, and would you believe, definite decisions have been made on some of the questionable issues. Here are some of the main points that have been decided (subject to change at any time):

→ The basic machine gun now sports a shiny, flashy, spinning gun barrel

→ The damage from the lightning gun has been reduced by 50% (deemed too powerful in the test build)

→ The flame thrower weapon has been completely ditched (it was too difficult to implement effectively in a fast-paced action game. It blurred the user's vision, and caused problems with whether it should set you on fire if you ran forward with it," explained Gnome Devine. "Kingpin did this very well, but that's a really different kind of game," he offered

→ Oh yest! The BFG(s&K) will be included in about 20% of the maps. It's a rapid exploding plasma-style beast. It's been balanced by including a very limited amount of ammo, and while if you get hit, you die, it does require some accuracy, as opposed to the pansy-assed BFG of *Quake II* that was a skill-less abomination

→ Though it didn't make the cut, Devine toyed with resurrecting the nail gun from *Quake I*, allowing it to fire nine different sized nails, giving it a variable range and damage potential. It was also considered that the nails would stick in walls, allowing you to make steps to access new areas or create your own camping spots

→ Not so much a tweak, but did you know that if you rocket-jump off one of the bounce pads on Q3Torture, it's possible to fly up to the quad ledge without having to hit the mid-level bounce pad? It's also possible (though extremely difficult) to make it if you bounce toward the railgun platform, but veer to one of the pads and rocket-jump off it. The momentum can take you miles high

A PRO TIP → On the Q3Tourney map, to avoid dropping into the rocket launcher area when coming through the teleporter from the lightning gun, use a bound "walk" key and strafe to the side, thereby landing on the ledge with the health, rather than falling to the rocket

"IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE PERFECT, IT HAS TO BE FUN." JOHN CASH, BOT PROGRAMMER

BRING ON THE MODELS

It's still not been finalized, but there'll be between 20 and 30 Paul Steed-created models moving, flipping, shooting, ducking, and dying, covered by some 90 amazing skins created by Kenneth Scott, the texture artist formerly of Ion Storm. Think any of the animations look cool? Steed did the motion-capture for them himself.

Among the familiar *Doom* guy, *Quake* marine, and models released in the test, those that have yet to be played sport some really fine touches (Steed's personal favorite is Major, the bad-ass *Quake II* female marine). Though one winged creature had to be trimmed due to the model clipping through the scenery, the decisions on what to make and what to scrap are based purely on the notion of what's cool. "If it's cool, then I'll model it and Kenneth will color it," Steed explained. This leaves it open that he might make the "fat evil clown on a unicycle" and many more once the game ships. (He's tentatively working with Scott on a "chick pack" of models to release to the community just for fun.)

The relative size of the models won't affect how they are used, contrary to popular belief. The female characters (especially the buxom beauty, Lucy) are no smaller than the male, since all the models use the same "bounding box" that outlines what constitutes their hit area. This static binding box is one reason that the early idea to have different classes was ditched. Steed explains, saying, "People would run around as the light, fast character, then as they approach combat have an alias to change to the heavy armored guy, light it out, then change back and run."

Right at the end of development, Carmack decided to change to a skeletal animation system, though this had a negligible impact on Steed's model creation. "The new skeletal animation system will derive all its data from Character Studio, the 3D Studio Max plugin," Steed explained. "There's no extra work for me to do other than to

load the file up and re-export it using the new option that will be created in Max."

Steed estimates that Carmack's co-development work on this with Ritual boss Jim Dose will save at least 2/3 of the memory consumed by the character data. That means Johnny NoRam is more likely to get a decent performance out of the target 64MB RAM base machine. But as Carmack commented in a recent .plan file, if you don't have 128MB, "buy more RAM."

Adding character to the models through their sounds has also been a part of Steed's focus. To that end, he's mighty proud of Major's aggressive, "taking-it-like-a-man" grunts, Slash's Japanese anime-inspired high-pitched squeals, and Mynx's husky snorts. Possibly the favorite, however, is the eyeball-on-two-arms weirdo, Orbb. Aside from the fantastic finger strumming he does when he's still for a moment, the instruction to the sound studio was to create a "creepy R2-D2" — that's exactly what was supplied.

These final touches are what give the basic concept of a pure multiplayer deathmatch the level of quality that will ensure *Quake III Arena*'s position as the last word in the deathmatching genre. With fresh flesh hopefully coming online craving the adrenaline rush of a high intensity deathmatch, Carmack's finely-tuned code, the level designers' perfectly balanced arenas, and the artists' beautiful shaping of characters and settings, *Q3A* is likely to be the only game you'll need on your hard drive this winter.

And when the mod community gets to grips with the newly-released code, the slew of new games styles and levels will keep it at the forefront of the game scene until... *Quake IV*.



Meet Lucy. On the right is her basic polygonal shape, with the detail skin mesh overlaid on top, before being textured. She isn't any easier to hit though, and doesn't sweat much for a big lass.

A whole new meaning to the phrase "double-barreled"



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JANE LIKES DICK!

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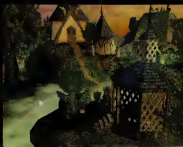
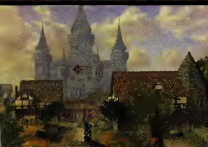


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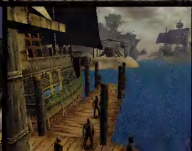


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THE PCXL MAKEOVER

HOW TO GO FROM GEEK TO CHIC



Okay, we know what you're thinking. Makeovers are something Oprah gives frumpy, middle-aged housewives so they'll forget that their asses have grown large enough to qualify for their own zip code. Let's make one thing perfectly clear: We don't give a damn about your ass. This is a long-standing PCXL policy. We adhere to it and it won't be changing anytime soon.

What we do care about is your image. After all, if you're reading this then you must already have a minimal level of coolness, in a geeky sorta way. But as the armed forces ask, are you really all that you can be? At PCXL, we do more gaming before 9:00 AM (with the noticeable exception of Ed) than most people do all day. However, with that kind of dedication comes a great responsibility to our readers stuck in the technological Stone Age of (shudder) 1992. You've probably seen these lost souls yourself, hanging around software bargain bins and sobbing softly as they pass racks of 3D cards, never truly knowing the pleasure of railgunning or rocket-jumping. We feel their pain and want to help.

So, let's call this a PCXL-over. Watch as we take a lowly geek and transform his game setup into one that any hardcore gamer would be proud to call his own.

Geek Boy (before)

http://www.pc.com

PC ACCELERATOR November 1999

The PC Games poster is an actual relic from Rob's past ... make fun of it at your peril!

PC GAMES POSTER

One of the last retreats for lapsed men with acute glandular conditions. This mag is dead, kaput, finished. Alas, Dr. Funny, we hardly knew ye.

PENCIL

Wood and graphite ... you realize you're just one step away from being the Unabomber, don't you?

GEEK

Sad and pathetic, the closest he's been to getting "laid" was watching the "Brady Bunch Goes Hawaii" episode.

COKEBOTTLE GLASSES

They say, "Hello, please kick my ass."

CRAP COMPUTER

Bought when CD-ROM drives were cutting-edge, it still boasts a 5 1/2" floppy drive, 486 processor, and tiny 14" monitor. It's not YaK compliant ... it's YaK compliant.

CHEAP SPEAKERS

Sound quality is too bad to be called tinny. More like "aluminum foil"-y.

CUT-RATE MOUSE

The only difference between this and a real mouse is that rodents wouldn't be caught dead with you.

8-BALL PEN HOLDER

Bought for 15 cents at a garage sale and you still got cheated.

DAWSON'S CREEK POSTER

It's a guy. It's a creek. Get over it. We bet you watch the Lifetime Network, too.

HANSON VIDEO

You should be ashamed of yourself. There's just no excuse for this. We're very, very disappointed in you, young man.

BAD GAMES

Listening to the advice of pimply-faced losers working at discount stores with "mart" in the title leads to these mistakes.



Power Gamer (after)

ELSA 3D REVEALER GLASSES

Bundled with the Erazor III TNT2 board, these glasses add flicker-free stereo 3D images for any game that supports DirectX 6 or above. Forget Pamela's lost implants ... just play Drakan wearing these and you'll never miss 'em. \$249 www.elsa.com

SUPPORTING AUREAL

A3D 2.0 API with surround speakers. You'll experience all the cool effects of the bundled Drakan, Heretic II, and Slave Zero. Perfect for when you're alone (which is probably most of the time) and you can crank up the volume. \$99 www.aureal.com

GOOD GAMES

Unreal, System Shock 2, Half-Life ... these are the types of games that get PCXL Killer Game Awards -- and for good reason.

VIEWSOMIC PB7 21" MONITOR

Ohmigod, this beast of a monitor will make gaming, word processing, or porn look better. Supporting up to 2048x1536 resolution running at 85MHz (and 1024x768 at 165MHz), the picture quality is crisp and it even has USB ports for extra peripherals built-in. \$1600 www.viewsomic.com

MICROSOFT SIDEWINDER FORCE FEEDBACK PRO

You've never played a space sim until you've played it with force feedback. Not quite the handjob we've always dreamed of, but if you're reading this, it's likely the closest you're ever going to get. \$149 www.microsoft.com

MICROSOFT SIDEWINDER GAMEPAD

It's been out for a few years now, but it's still the most copied gamepad out there. An excellent design and a comfortable fit make this pad a winner. Absolutely necessary for playing sports games and third-person adventure games à la Tomb Raider. \$34.95 www.microsoft.com

MICROSOFT INTELLIMOUSE EXPLORER

Quite possibly the coolest-looking mouse we've ever seen, this one has a glowing red underside and an industrial-silver finish. If the Terminator got crushed down into mouse form, he'd look just like this. Replaces the mouse ball with an optical sensor and digital signal processor and also adds a couple of extra buttons on the left side. \$74.95 www.microsoft.com

AMD ATHLON PROCESSOR

Formerly known as the K5, this next generation chip from AMD comes in 500, 550, 600, and 650MHz speed grades and includes 3DNow! technology. Plus, it comes with a refrigeration unit that can help keep your beers cold. (Not really, but that would be cool, no? AMD, you listening?) Check out the full review in our Techfiles section. \$249-\$849 www.amd.com

MICROSOFT FORCE-FEEDBACK STEERING WHEEL

Make your racing games come alive with a force-feedback wheel. Includes a clamp for desk-top attachments, sturdy pedals, and power supply. Once you experience what force feedback can do for you, you'll never want to go back. \$199 www.microsoft.com

LABTEC MP-350 HEADPHONES

Good headphones are absolutely necessary for listening to games or MP3s when you don't want to wake the neighbors or alienate your girlfriend (or get some really cool stereo sound effects). These babies have a padded headband and leatherette ("I" can't believe it's not cow!) ear pads for greater comfort along with an extra-long 9' shielded cord. The MP-350s are also available with a 6' cord and foam ear pads. www.labtec.com



Commander

MATROX

MILLENNIUM G400
A fast 3D accelerator is an absolute necessity and the G400 racks up better speed scores than most cards on the market. Integrated 2D, 3D, and DVD performance and, best of all, Dualhead support for two monitor connections. So, don't throw out that old 14" ... use it as a second monitor. \$249
www.matrox.com/mga



LIQUOR

Just in case a can of Coke accidentally winds up in that mini-fridge, these mixers will add the kick you need to survive any bad game.
www.IdonThaveaproblem.com

YAMAHA DSP-E492 AMPLIFIER

This one comes as an optional pack-in with the Hunsaker Battle Chair, but every good sound setup needs a receiver/amplifier for playing games in style on your home entertainment center or testing your decibel endurance. It comes with Dolby Digital Pro Logic sound and its own remote control. Part of Hunsaker \$499 chair deal
www.yamaha.com



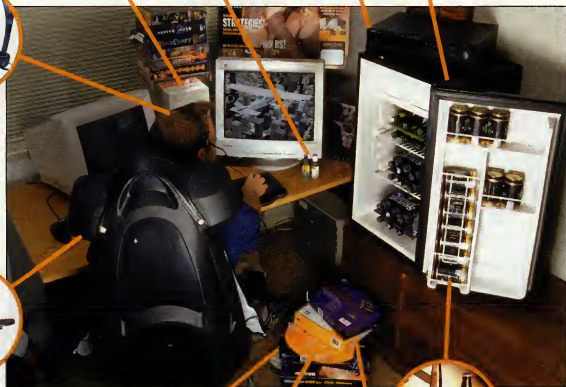
MINI-FRIDGE

You need it. You must have it. How perfect is it to have a whole load of cold ones at mere arm's distance away? The ideal complement to every perfect setup (in fact, there's an argument for ditching any of these peripherals for this.). \$200
www.minifridgesrus.com



LABTEC

CLEARVOICE HEAD MIC
Taunting enemies during net play or making new friends with Netmeeting? You need a good microphone to make yourself heard, loud and clear. Try a Labtec LVA-7330 head mic or LVA-7330 collar mic to get started. Both use NCAT2 amplification technology to reduce annoying background noise. \$49.95
www.labtec.com



HUNSAKER BATTLE CHAIR

Like the Rolls Royce of audio immersion chairs, the Hunsaker wowed everyone at this past year's E3. Literally "feels" the game via an 8" woofer and two built-in head speakers that'll make your entire body tingle with each explosion. Options include attachable Action Trays that hold your mouse or joystick and a 180 watt, 6 channel Yamaha amplifier (above). We recommend getting the cushion, too. \$299 - \$499 (depending on options)
www.battlechair.com



ACTIONTEC

ACTION LINK
Set up your own LAN and experience real head-to-head action without Internet lag. If you have two computers, setting up a network via this USB connection kit will increase data transfer speeds 35 times over serial ports and requires no internal connections. \$74.95
www.actiontec.com



EZLINK USB

INSTANT NETWORK
Similar to the Action Link, use your USB port to create a LAN by connecting PCs and laptops together via a single cord and the supplied software. \$89.95
www.ezlinkusb.com



BEER

Nature's most perfect food. Hops, barley, yeast ... hey, that's nutrition, right? This is really what you need to mini-fridge for in the first place. \$5 for the crap, \$8 for the fine brews
www.coldfrostone.com



ACTIONTEC

CALL WAITING MODEM
Having one phone line can be dangerous to your social life if you're an avid gamer. (Hey, Denise Richards might be calling ... you never know.) The \$64 Call Waiting modem gives you a fighting chance by letting you choose whether to accept a call or continue your online gaming/downloading. \$104.99 - \$124.99
www.actiontec.com



Pool Shark

CAMBRIDGE SOUNDWORKS FPS2000 DIGITAL SPEAKERS

There's no point in having a kick-ass sound card and amplifier if you don't have a hell-cool set of speakers to back them up. These 3D surround sound speakers are especially designed to work digitally with Creative's SoundBlaster Live! card and come with a subwoofer. \$399.99 www.cambridgesoundworks.com

KENSINGTON SPORTS CONTOUR MOUSE WRIST PAD

You say that foam mousepad works just fine? Well, this comfortable pad supports your wrist with a pillow of squishy gel, providing the edge you need in a battle royale. \$8 www.kensington.com

MIACOMET'S REAL FEEL POOL CUE CONTROLLER

Load up your favorite pool game and use this mouse/pool stick combo to make realistic shots. The controller moves like a mouse, letting you set English (the spin, not the language), etc. Then, with the bundled stick (or your own) play the shots with the speed and touch of a pro. You'll have to provide the cigarette smoke fog and skanky booze whores, though. \$59.95 www.miacomet.com

INTERACT HAMMERHEAD FX

While it's impossible to make a force-feedback gamepad, Interact has done the next best thing by borrowing the rumble feedback technology found in console gamepads and bringing it to the PC. This baby looks like a combination of the Sidewinder Gamepad and the Sony Dual Shock. \$59.99 www.interact-acc.com



Other options for your makeup kit...



BENWIN BW2000 SPEAKERS

If you can't pony up the big bucks for the multi-speaker setup, may we suggest flat panel speakers instead? Includes a

subwoofer, built-in 3D surround sound, and two ultra-thin panel speakers. \$89.99 www.benwin.com

SGRL'S THE BOARD

Snowboarding on a computer is like bungie-jumping in a swimming pool. But if you're too poor to make it to Aspen, then "The Board" is your next best bet. You'll look stupid at first... until you fall off and look really stupid... but at least you'll get some exercise. \$99 www.sgrr.com

LOGITECH WINGMAN FORCE-FEEDBACK MOUSE

The final frontier in force-feedback technology, this mouse simulates bumps, gun recoils, jump impacts and anything else you can think of. You can even "feel" the icons and menus on your Windows desktop. Comes with enhanced versions of *Heavy Gear II*, *Rollroad Tycoon II: Gold Edition*, and *Gruntz*. No word on whether pornsites are planning to support the mouse with their own sets of bumps and grinds. \$99.95 www.logitech.com

MICROSOFT GAME PAD PRO

If the "magic fingers" gamepad doesn't do it for you, you can still experience the next generation with Microsoft's update to their Sidewinder Gamepad. The stylishly streamlined "Pro" features a d-pad with proportional and digital control. www.microsoft.com

SEE DICK
PLAY WITH JANE!

SEE JANE
PLAY WITH DICK!



SEE JANE
BLOW DICK
AWAY!

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ACTUAL GAME IMAGES

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YOU'RE JAKE LOGAN, INTERGALACTIC BAD-ASS AND ONE OF THE BEST MERCENARY PILOTS IN THE SOL SYSTEM. FRAMED BY A POWERFUL MEGA-CORPORATION AND BANISHED TO THE LAWLESS **FRINGE** OF COLONIZED SPACE, YOU'VE GOT TO REBUILD YOUR SHIP AND YOUR LIFE BY THE ONLY MEANS YOU KNOW HOW - AS A GUN-FOR-HIRE. GET READY FOR THE MOST INTENSE SPACE-COMBAT ADVENTURE EVER CREATED.

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NOVAWORLD

ESRB



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Mastery of the Force
requires that one
purge all unnecessary
activities from daily life.

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Prepare to immerse yourself in the epic adventure that is *The Phantom Menace*.

As the central character, you will journey to all the stunning locations of Episode I, where you are destined to play a decisive role in every key event. All-consuming? Yes. But then, there's no such thing as a part-time Jedi.



www.lucasarts.com/products/phantommenace
www.starwars.com

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indy.lucasarts.com



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Try diplomacy first.

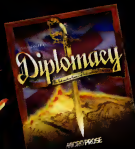


You can always invade them later.

AWALON HILL'S

Diplomacy

Bring out your inner dictator



May your wit be as sharp as your sword, because Avalon Hill's Diplomacy has captured the true spirit of the legendary board game. You'll start as one of the seven pre-WWI superpowers, England, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, Turkey, and Austria-Hungary. These political boundaries will become your prey as you negotiate your way to the top. Beg, threaten, plead and argue your way past nations where friends become pawns and enemies become allies. You'll have to be cunning. Smooth. And deceitful. This is a game that can't be left to chance.



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MICROPROSE
www.microprose.com

Go to <http://pcx1.ign.com/gaming411>. Product Number 99

Nvidia strikes back

It's a 2D card, a 3D accelerator, a GPU, and a low-cal dessert topping all in one

Just last month we were decrying "The Attack Of The 3D Cards" after 3Dfx's T-Buffer announcement and the news that a shiny new Voodoo4 would be sitting on store shelves come this fall (though Spring 2000 looks more realistic). Now we know why 3Dfx was in such a hurry. By the time you read this, Nvidia will have released the GeForce 256, and it comes ready to rumble.

While all other 3D cards rely on the PC's CPU to handle transform and lighting calculations, the GeForce 256 is a Graphics Processing Unit (GPU), or a single-chip processor with integrated transform, lighting, clipping, and rendering engines capable of producing 15 million polygons per second all on its lonesome. Games optimized for the GeForce 256 will take the heavy workload of managing transform and lighting off the CPU and put it on the GPU instead, allowing the CPU to concentrate on AI, physics, and gameplay. Theoretically, a Pentium 200 with a

GeForce 256 could get similar framerate to a GeForce-enhanced PIII-500, as long as the game isn't too AI- or physics-intensive.

"Uh-oh," you're thinking, "what if none of my games are optimized?" Don't fret, the GeForce 256 is estimated to be three or four times more powerful than the TNT2 Ultra running under DirectX 6, and will see even more gains under DirectX 7. Optimized titles, those using DirectX 7 or an enhanced version of OpenGL, will begin appearing at the end of this year and will include games like *Shadow Man*, *Halo*, and *Messiah*. GeForce 256 boards should be out now from companies like Creative, Guillemot, Asus, and Canopus.

Of course, all of these performance possibilities are based on blind faith. While you may be holding a GeForce 256 in your grubby little hands as you read this, no reference boards were available to test before deadline (less than three weeks before release) and Nvidia wouldn't share any benchmarks. Their reasoning: Under

DirectX 6.0, benchmark figures would be far less than the not-yet-released DirectX 7.0, thereby understating the true power of the board. That's fine, but most gamers are interested in what a board can do for the games they have now, not games that have yet to be released. In fact, on our trip to Nvidia corporate headquarters, we saw the usual cool technology demos (a reflective silvery bubble bouncing around in realtime and a detailed car model), but no actual games running on the card.

While the introduction of the GPU may stave off the need to upgrade your CPU every year, still expect to spend almost \$600 a year (\$250-300 per board twice a year). Just like 3Dfx, Nvidia has confirmed that new hardware will be released every six months like clockwork. (Ironically, *Halo*, one of the games set to work with the technology, won't be out until after the successor to the GeForce 256 is released.) Still, for the hardcore gamer, that beats spending \$2000 a year on a new computer. ▶

TERMS TO KNOW

CPU → Central Processing Unit

GPU → A highly unstable CPU that whines in the voice of Anthony Daniels whenever it is about to crash... which is quite often

GEFORCE 256 → The Ge stands for geometry, the force refers to the 4 pixel pipeline, and the 256 is the 256-bit 2D rendering engine

LIGHTING → Creating an illusion of light in a computer image.

LIARING → Creating an illusion of delight in game journalists when PR rep promises that new chipset is best thing since silicon implants

RENDER → A graphic representation of an abstract mathematical 3D model

TRANSFORM → The task of handling how a scene changes from one frame to the next, including movement, scaling, and rotation

TRANSCOLORFORMS → The task of arranging thin, sticky rubber pictures of transvestites around a scene, including moving, scaling down, and rotating their Shrinky Dinks



Yep, it sure looks pretty — on paper.

FEATURES

SINGLE-CHIP GPU
(Graphics Processing Unit)
Complete on-chip integration of the entire 3D pipeline (transformation, lighting, setup, and rendering). Offers the lowest possible component and board design cost

INTEGRATED TRANSFORM AND LIGHTING
Delivers two to four times the triangle rate for two to four times more detailed 3D scenes. Frees up CPU computations for physics and AI, which results in more realistic object behaviors and character animation in games

INDEPENDENT PIPELINED QUADENGINE™
Separate engines for transformation, lighting, setup, and rendering provide an extremely powerful, highly efficient architecture that delivers 15 million triangles per second. Allows applications to represent 3D characters and environments with the highest degree of complexity possible

256-BIT QUADPIPE RENDERING ENGINE
Four independent pixel-rendering pipelines deliver up to 480 million, eight-sample, fully-filtered pixels per second. Guarantees very high color quality and texturing speed at maximum framerate

AGP 4X WITH FAST WRITES
Enables the GPU to send data directly to the GPU to maximize overall system performance. Avoids costly data copying to and from main memory, which significantly slows down your system

HIGH-QUALITY HDTV PROCESSOR
Delivers quality DVD and HDTV playback and digital recording

350MHZ RAMDAC
Delivers clear, sharp, solid image quality at 2048x1536 resolution at 75Hz

HIGH-SPEED MEMORY INTERFACE
Design to support current SDRAM/SGRAM and upcoming SDR/DDR high-speed memory

256-BIT 2D RENDERING ENGINE
Delivers fast 2D performance for ultra-fast screen refresh at high resolutions and 32-bit color depths

SUPPORTS DIRECTX 7/OPENGL
Ensures that applications can leverage all the new features without additional cost or support. Guarantees compatibility and the best out-of-box end user experience

AMD K7 Athlon

Could the dominance of Intel's Pentium chip be coming to an end? AMD unleashes the Athlon with the best chance yet for genuine competition in the chip marketplace

Have you heard of the Athlon? AMD's stringently focus-tested, carefully chosen brand name for their K7 processor? If your answer is no, there are going to be some mighty miffed marketing managers at the hot chip manufacturer, since, for the last couple of months, they've engaged in an extensive bombardment of the hardcore gaming market. From being the titular sponsor of the AMD Professional Gamer's League, to supplying the tournament machines at QuakeCon 99, AMD has been pushing its profile in a big way. The reason for their excitement (and a certain degree of confidence) is the previously-mentioned Athlon.

Pitched as the genuine "next generation" of processor technology, the Athlon takes a few gambles right off the bat. Swing one: The all-new chip size is not compatible with any existing slots — no Socket 7 or even Slot 1. Sure, it's a slot technology, but you're going to need a brand new motherboard to fit it.

That's the fundamental reason why the Athlon will be featured as part of OEM machines way ahead of it moving into the general upgrader's market. It's not just a simple upgrade — more an epic overhaul of the core pieces of any PC system.

So, in order to facilitate the hardware reviewer's situation of wanting to get hands-on play time with the chip — and putting its 600MHz core processor speed through the ringer — AMD kindly supplied a machine that (on paper at least) was worthy of any tech-phile gamer's most explicit fantasy. Here's what we got:

AMD Athlon 600MHz processor
with 512KB L2 cache

AMD Athlon motherboard

128MB PC100 SDRAM

Diamond V770 32MB TNT2 Ultra

Creative Labs Soundblaster Live

Western Digital 18GB ATA66 EIDE drive

Toshiba 6X DVD-ROM drive

LinkSys HomeLink network adaptor

BENCHMARKS:

PCXL used Futuremark 3Dmarks as a gauge for testing video cards using our base PII 300MHz Celeron machine, with 128MB PC100 SDRAM and 18GB Western Digital hard drive.

PII 300 (WITH G400)

QUAKE II → 51.5 fps (800x600)
49.4 fps (1024x768)
3DMARK → 2961

ATHLON (WITH G400)

QUAKE II → 88.5 fps (800x600)
71.9 fps (1024x768)
3DMARK → 6696

NOTE → AMD created their own K7-specific 3Dmark DLL. This file optimizes the 3Dmark software for the system. As such, a standard 3Dmark score for the PII 300 should not be directly compared with the K7 300mark score. Cheeky buggers.



Enough to make you drool? Us too. And so, without a thought, PCXL began ripping off the guts. Out came the video card in favor of the Matrox G400 Max (for its Dual-Head support). Also, we dumped the Linksys card in favor of an Actiontec 56K modem. Then we were ready to roll...

Our finding: The Athlon flies. Not one game (from a list of tested options considered for the job due to their intensive hit on the processor, hard drive, or video card) offered the merest hint of pausing for breath (the games were *Half-Life*, *Quake II*, *Quake III*, *Dracon*, and *System Shock 2*). Given the state of a few PCXL staff machines, the Athlon was taking us to the promised land.

Naturally there are caveats. The first is the long-term stability of the Athlon. It's something that we can't make a call on yet, but we'll keep testing and let you know how the machine holds up. AMD certainly claims to have zero compatibility issues (their floating point problems blighting popular acceptance of their K6-2 processors) but their history gives us enough skepticism to keep a close eye out for potential problems.

Another point to raise is the noise generated by the monster fan needed to cool this red-hot processor. While the perpetual buzz is something most PC users block out automatically, the Athlon actually sounds like a heavy-duty fan or full-on air conditioning unit working overtime.

Minor gripes considering the firepower that's way ahead of Intel's current PIII configuration? We'd say so, right now at least. The bus speed performance increases, and sheer MHz power of

the processor is enough to rocket AMD to the top of the speed charts. If you're a gadget-laden power user with cash to burn, throw some on the engulfing flame of the Athlon. Time will tell if it has staying power versus the Intel juggernaut, but the future is rosy.

BOTTOM LINE:

The performance of the Athlon in general testing was excellent, which serves as a good back-up to the expected high benchmarking scores from a system configured specifically to be tested. Certainly the video card of choice (either a 32MB TNT2 Ultra or the G400) makes a significant difference to our game test scores — but what else do you expect?

At press time Compaq had just announced that Presario systems would be based on the Athlon, with other PC manufacturers likely to follow suit. Indeed, high-end system maker Falcon Northwest revealed that they are ending several years of Intel-based machines by building their new TALON systems with Athlon 600 and 650MHz processors.

Hardcore gamers stuck with a PII 266 or less should certainly consider having the Athlon power their next system for its blinding speed. That said, the requirement for a whole new motherboard (albeit one running at a faster bus speed than the current top end Slot 1 boards) makes it a more precarious decision as more than just an upgrade option.

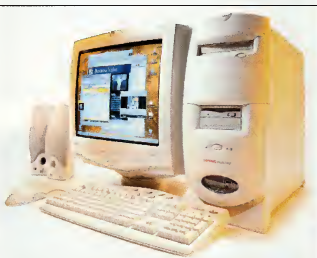
RATING 8

+ Pluses

- Faster bus speed on new motherboards
- Up to 800MHz power with overclocking
- Likely to be priced below equivalent speed Pentium III

- Minuses

- Long-term reliability a question mark
- Loud fan
- Requires a whole new system purchase



Compaq is the first (and biggest) PC manufacturer to announce an Athlon-based system, the Presario 5861, priced at \$1999.

3D Geek News

Catching up on the wonderful wacky world of PC gaming hardware, PCXL digs up the info that could affect your gameplaying future. Or it may rot your brain. Let us know which happens.

DIAMOND LIVES!

A New Card, A New Chipset, And The Same Old Tude

No one can deny that it's been an interesting year for Diamond Multimedia. After the announcement that S3 would soon acquire the company, people in the industry were more than willing to write Diamond's obituary. (Not PCXL, of course — nooooo, we were merely the pallbearers.)

Matters weren't helped by the release of the Diamond Stealth III S540, a board utilizing the Savage 4 chipset that greatly underwhelmed us, since its main feature, S3TC texture compression, isn't supported by any games currently on the market.

Forging ahead in the same six-month 3D accelerator cycle that has overtaken the rest of the industry, Diamond has announced the Viper II, powered by S3's Savage 2000 chipset. Featuring Transform and Lighting integrated technology similar to that found in Nvidia's GeForce 256, it will have a true 128-bit 3D engine, resolution support up to 1920x1200, TV-out, hardware-accelerated DVD, and 32MB of onboard memory. The entire package, including Diamond's proprietary high-quality InControl Tools 99 control software suite, is set to ship in October for under \$200.

Like the GeForce 256, no benchmarks were available by deadline, but we'll have a full review soon. At nearly \$100 less than the projected GeForce price, the Viper II may well be the perfect alternative for the gamer with a budget.

DIRECTX 7 HEAVEN

Microsoft's Direct3D Just Keeps Getting Better

So you've been hearing a lot about this DirectX 7. (Not from the publicity-shy Microsoft, of course.) Actually, it's the improvements made to the graphics portion of DirectX which may make you want to lay a big sloppy one on the old Billster. While you wipe that overtly gross visual image from your mind, let's review the improvements the newest release of Direct3D has in store for you:

Hardware Transforms and Lighting — Enables hardware support for the computationally-intensive manipulation of polygons (i.e. lighting, movement, cool stuff), taking the burden off your poor, overworked CPU and putting it on your 3D accelerator instead.

Cubic Environment Mapping — Allows developers to create real-time, photo-realistic reflections and lighting effects that were previously prohibitively difficult to program in software.

Vertex Blending — Creates smooth joints by joining disconnected pieces of geometry to form a smooth surface without cracks.

Particle Systems — Seen in games as explosions, fireworks, sparks, or fire, particle systems are geometric points or quads with simple texture maps applied to them. The more points generated, the more interesting the effect. With DirectX 7, the burden of generating particles is passed on to the 3D accelerator, allowing for bigger, better effects. (And that's all that really matters, right?)

BEAUTY IS 3DEEP

Is There Any "Wow Factor" in Monitor Calibration?

After ripping open that box and installing your new 3D accelerator, spare a thought for that pile of packed-in goodies. Before consigning them to the "boring" pile, check out 3Deep, a monitor calibration tool that claims to let you experience games "as the game creator intended."

While most 3D cards ship with their own proprietary gamma correction tool, unless your monitor is specifically calibrated for its unique environment (light levels, type of light, placement), most games can appear washed out or too dark. The goal of 3Deep is to mathematically adjust the red, green, and blue values during gameplay. Several games, like *Shadow Mon*, *Gabriel Knight III*, and *Babylon 5* are 3Deep-enhanced to ensure they look exactly as the developer intended, but older games can still be run using the "default gamma" setting.

Our experience with 3Deep has been somewhat mixed. While it does what it purports to do, 3Deep must be turned on whenever you want to play a game and the calibration tool doesn't work well for all setups. For example, our offices have a mixture of fluorescent and natural lighting, but 3Deep doesn't have a setting for mixed lighting. This resulted in games that were either too dark or a little too yellow-greenish. But if you're a stickler for graphic perfection and have a stable light source, you can't go wrong with this free pack-in.

QUICK HITS

3DFX FREEBIE

Sorry, we're not talking free cards, but a free texture compression software tool that has been released to the game software and video hardware community gratis. FTX is essentially an answer to S3's poorly supported S3TC. This software will compress textures, possibly by as much as 8x, reducing their size (and therefore the detail and amount that game creators can apply to their games) while maintaining the visual quality. The supplied example: A 256x256 texture is 256K, but when compressed with this new software, will take just 32K.

Support for FTX will be included in DirectX 7, Glide, and OpenGL, with the aim being adoption by the gaming software and hardware community. In theory, other card manufacturers, including Nvidia and Matrox could introduce support. 3DFX's apparent benevolence is based on a belief that their software will really help games look better. "It will give developers an impetus to use it if everyone has it," 3DFX's Software Product Manager Eric Johnson told us. "There are things to worry about — PS2, Dreamcast — and we see this as a contribution to the industry to ensure that the PC is the number one gaming platform," he continued.

At press time, shortly after the announcement, developers for Bungie's *Halo* and *Oni* were quoted as including support for the technology. No doubt there will be more to follow.

ALL-NEW AUREAL

After supplying high-quality sound cards to a number of manufacturers over the years (most notably Diamond), Aureal, creators of the Aureal 3D surround software are entering the retail market on their own. The Vortex S12500 will support A3D 1.0, support for two or four speakers, and comes bundled with Aureal's Vortex Player and Pgnosis! Drek, retailing for about \$69.95. The slightly higher grade Vortex S20200 supports A3D 2.0, has the same music software bundle as the Vortex 1, and adds *Heretic II* and *Slave Zero* for just \$30 more.

CREATIVE CONFUSION

Creative Labs recently announced three new sound card bundles, which all feature impressive and the easy-to-use editor and strong developer relations should mean the best 3D audio support of any 3D sound card. The only differences between the three cards are the software bundle, the name, the packaging, and the bullet points on the back of the box. The MP3+ (\$99) comes with — you guessed it — MP3-related software only; the X-Gamer (\$99) comes with *Thief* and *Need For Speed: High Stakes* while the Platinum edition comes with all of the above and a snazzy drive bay for \$199. PCXL will sort through all this confusion and test out these cards soon — just don't go buying all three of 'em now or you'll merely justify their shelf flooding marketing tactics.



You don't have to look at some grossly out of proportion silicon-fused nymph to know that beauty is NOT only "3Deep." But it would be a lot more fun than these screen shots.

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THE HIVE-MIND

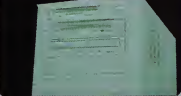
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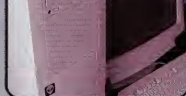
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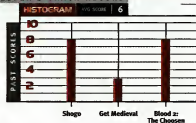
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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



No One Lives Forever (Working Title)

If that's true, then how do you explain Strom Thurmond?

Way back when, this was going to be a preview of *No One Lives Forever* — a smirking tribute to '60s-era spy flicks masquerading as a first-person shooter. It looked like *NOLF* could be the PC's answer to *Goldenee* with a splash of *Austin Powers* thrown in for good measure. Well ... as my journalistic idol, Roseanne Roseannadanna, used to say "It's always something." In her case, she would follow up that remark with a rant on back fat or toilet paper stuck to your shoes, but I just don't have that kind of latitude. Anyway, while the above description is essentially still true, the *NOLF* name may be jettisoned completely and the groovy secret agent cat become a feminine feline. Meow, baby.

Did MGM Interactive, owners of the James Bond license, make some threatening calls? After all,



It may not look like much is going on, but we can guarantee that any second now a power-mad supervillain and his evil henchmen will come tearing through here. Any second now ... just wait.

the title is a not-so subtle "tribute" to the Bond movie franchise, which might have seemed uncomfortably close to MGM's own Bond game for the PlayStation. Or maybe Monolith hoped to shag a Powers-ful box office license of its own, but met up with the game industry's answer to Dr. Evil.

As much as PCXL would love to start rumors, the "Powers" that be (I can keep this up all day) strongly refute such vile schemes. Says Project Lead Designer Craig Hubbard, "When people reacted to *NOLF* by calling it a James Bond game, we decided to make some changes. It was primarily a matter of making sure people had the right expectations."

Meeting the right expectations has included pulling a total 180 on the former lead character, Adam Church, turning him into an as-yet unnamed half French/half English female agent who's more than another Bond bimbo. Hubbard

promises that most changes to gameplay and mission structure will be transparent, but the story has actually improved. "I'd say [the story's] even tighter and more intriguing with a woman as the hero. For one thing, the whole idea of a female intelligence operative in the 1960s presents dramatic hooks that aren't there with a male lead," notes Hubbard. "Because she's a woman, nobody really trusts her ability to deal with the high-stakes situations, so there's this constant second-guessing on the part of her superiors. I'm hoping players will derive some extra motivation from the needling and condescension."

Whether or not predominantly male PC gamers will relate to the spy biz's glass ceiling remains to be seen. A shift in tone may alarm those who were eager to see a goofy spy spoof. While Hubbard maintains that *NOLF*, despite its name, was "never meant

FIVE QUESTIONS

CRAG HUBBARD, PROJECT LEAD FOR NOLF (WORKING TITLE), TALKED AT LENGTH ABOUT HIS EVIL PLANS.

Q: How did the idea for *NOLF* (Working Title) come about?

A: Originally, we set out to make a '60s spy game, an idea that was first sparked by *Charade* (starring Cary Grant and Audrey Hepburn). We've drawn inspiration from other films, novels, and TV shows from the era, including the Bond films, *Our Man Flint*, *The Pink Panther*, and so on. Other influences include WWII movies like *Guns of Navarone* and *Where Eagles Dare*.

Q: Who is the main character?

A: She's a smart, capable, incredibly determined agent. She's still learning the ropes, so she occasionally makes mistakes, which are even more painful because of the intense scrutiny she's under. She has a gift for reading people and environments. It's this particular skill that distinguishes her as an agent.

Q: Since Bond was a womanizer, will that make her a ... umm ... "manizer"?

A: Nah, we're de-emphasizing sexual innuendo. She is very busy with her work — no time or energy for romance.

Q: Does the character drink martinis or gin drinks? Shaken or stirred?

A: She enjoys the occasional martini, with Russian vodka, always stirred (shaken martinis are low class). Otherwise, she rarely indulges in cocktails.

Q: Why take over the world? It sounds like a lot of work.

A: That's why most good supervillains are driven by fiscal greed and the thirst for personal vengeance. The energy they'd devote to ruling the world could be far better spent defeating the system, wreaking havoc, and exacting revenge.

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Monolith
PUBLISHER → Fox Interactive
RELEASE DATE → TBD
3D SUPPORT → DirectX9

INTEREST GAUGE



THE TYPE

Before its gaming sex change, *NOLF* had hype galore because it mixed camp, spies, and the new Lithtech 2.0 engine.

THE HURDLE

A change in name, focus, and the main character's gender could disintegrate that hype.

THE HIT

Think *Goldenee* set in the swinging '60s and you'll wonder why nobody's done this before now.



No One Lives Forever Gallery



As you can see, the new Littech 2 graphics engine allows for the seamless combination of huge indoor and outdoor environments. The "Suit" (above) is sad because his uncanny resemblance to Christopher Walken resulted in Tanya Roberts spurning him for a Roger Moore look-a-like.





These guys are busy building a new title for *No One Lives Forever* (Working Title) that has nothing to do with the James Bond series. The suggestions so far: *Die And Die Some More*, *Cleavage With A View*, *Grass-raker*, *Learning Permit To Kill*, *On Her Majesty's Room Service*, *Pentavagina*, *Never Say Fire In A Crowded Movie Theater Again*, and *Diamonds Are Really Hard*.



ALWAYS SUMTHIN'

We contacted the spirit of the greatest female journalist never to get her own seat on "The View" to tell us what she thinks of *NOLF* (Working Title). With our apologies to the spirit of Gilda Radner and the equally dead "SNL":

PCXL → Roseanne, what's your analysis of *NOLF*?

ROSEANNE → When I, Roseanne Roseannadanna, heard that *No One Lives Forever* was six feet under and a bullet for maggots, I was sad, miserable, and generally broken up. But then I found out it was back and I was happy as a bitch in heat. 'Cause ya know, I've got some experience with death. Imagine, if you will, the recently deceased Roseanne Roseannadanna, all cute and angelic as a ghost, knockin' on the pearly gates. So, I get inside and who do I nearly knock over with my wings but the big gongolala himself! He's strollin' around all high and mighty like He owns the place or something. And let me tell ya, when they say that cleanliness is next to Godliness, they haven't gotten a whiff of the funk comin' off this guy. And I'm not talking about George Clinton type of funk, either. I mean, I thought I was gonna die ... again! So, I said "Hey — Mr. Almighty! What ya tryin' to do, make me sick or somethin'?" I'm dyin' over here! If you're all-knowing, then how come you don't know you smell like a pig fart?" But it turns out it's the robe he's been wearing for the past millennium that reeks ...

PCXL → Um, excuse me, Roseanne ... what does this have to do with *No One Lives Forever*?

ROSEANNE → Well, I just guess to show ya ... it's always something. Either your videogame's lead character's gettin' his crank yanked or God sinks to high heaven. It reminds me of the song my great-great-great-grandmother Nana Fafanina Bandana Roseannadanna sang to me every night when I was a kid in bed, all warm and snug as a bug in a rug. It went like this:

Rock a bye Roseanne
Get lots of rest
'Cuz you will need it
Or you'll be a big pest
Don't get a sex change
'Cuz it'll sure hurt
And wash all your undies
Or people won't think that's dirt!

Good night, my little Roseannadanna, and have a pleasant tomorrow!



"C'mon ... work with me people. I ask for a friggin' airplane and you give me a hang glider. Oh, great ... I just threw up in my mouth."



"If you're evil and you know it, clap your hands. If you're evil and you know it clap your hands. If you're evil and you know it, your face will surely show it. If you're evil and you know it clap your hands."

► **P-55** to be a Bond parody," it was still a campy homage to all those secret agent shows our parents grew up on. Now, Monolith claims to have loftier goals. "If everything goes according to plan, you will have laughed out loud a few times, seethed with righteous anger at the evil machinations of your foe, basked in the relief of having survived perilous situations, and maybe even become a bit misty-eyed once or twice."

The focus of the missions is variety. Players will travel from Morocco to the German Alps and even make a trip to the bottom of the North Sea while battling your standard issue evil organization bent on world domination. Owing much more to games like *Metal Gear Solid*, *Tenchu*, and *Syphon Filter* than *Unreal* or *Quake*, *NOLF*

emphasizes stealth just as much as adrenaline-charged action. Rather than create one large, sprawling environment, each mission will be broken up into "scenes" connected by brief cinematics. This allows the focus to be on key story points instead of the tedium of running around big levels looking for keycards or scripted events.

For example, according to Hubbard, "the very first mission of the game finds you protecting a diplomat from assassins as he strolls from his office to his car. Assaultants will occasionally appear from doorways and rooftops, so you'll have to pick them off with a sniper rifle from your vantage in the bathroom of a penthouse apartment in downtown Marrakech. It's kind of a shooting gallery. Once he's safely away, you're supposed to rendezvous with your partner at the hotel where you're staying. Rather than worrying about how you get there, we jump directly to the point where you arrive at the hotel to find the bad guys waiting for you, which is the next relevant point in the story."

And what would a good spy yarn be without a full complement of guns and gadgets? Several different types of pistols, rifles, and sub-machine guns, straight from the spy and adventure shows of the era, are on hand. Weapons designed for specific environments (like underwater spear guns) will

also be available. So far, most of the gadgets sound like holdovers from the male-oriented *NOLF*: A briefcase missile launcher, a wrist-welded poison dart gun, security camera disablers, lock picks, a mini-welder and some promised surprises. At the risk of sounding chauvinistic (a risk *PCXL* takes waaaaaay too often), we hope some of them will be unique to a femme fatale. A lipstick laser or an exploding compact (Hey, it was the '60s) could help differentiate this title from your average *Mission: Impossible* port.

Making this game stand out from the rest of the pack will be Monolith's biggest hurdle and could explain the recent gender bender. (Babe appeal probably won't hurt, either.) How will it be different in an increasingly crowded and violent market? Touts Hubbard, "It's set in the '60s instead of the near future. There are no aliens, monsters, or otherworldly environments to be found. The world is vibrant and colorful instead of dark and gritty. The gameplay also offers quite a bit of variety, with subterfuge, disguises, vehicles, and gadgets in addition to combat." Well, Bond hasn't been able to do all that yet, so maybe it's time a lady got the job done.

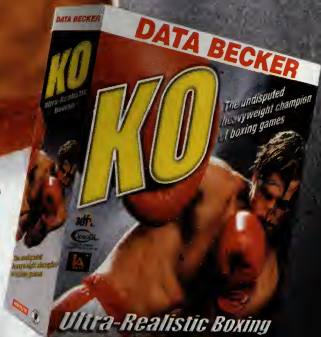
— **CHUCK OSBORN'S** deepest, darkest secret is that Roger Moore was his favorite Bond. Oh, the shame!

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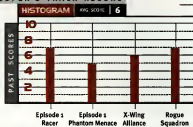
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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



Force Commander

Classic Star Wars in an RTS — what could possibly go wrong?

The Battle of Hoth, from *The Empire Strikes Back*, is clearly one of the most amazing cinematic conflicts ever to grace the silver screen, and every wide-eyed kid or young-at-heart adult, whether they admit it or not, has spent nights dreaming of participating in that battle. This is why the promise of *Force Commander* is so enticing. Not only can you

recreate that battle, but you can control each unit in the Empire. Oh yes, the single-player game has you heading up the Imperial force, so you can send in a squad of AT-ATs to wipe out those pesky rebels or round up a platoon of Imperial Stormtroopers and rid the force of farm boy Luke.

Any Star Wars fan worth his salt would be excited just by the mere prospect of such a game. Being a

huge fan of good RTS games (*Red Alert*, *StarCraft*) and a still far-from-clean Star Wars junkie, this seemed like a marriage made in heaven. When details were first released, it looked like LucasArts was going to give us just what we wanted — *Star WarsCraft*. However, since the *Episode One*-imposed hiatus, *Force Commander* has undergone some major gameplay and philosophical changes — not the least of which is a switch from classic top-down 2D perspective to a close-to-the-action 3D. While this switch and close proximity to the action does a great job of giving players a sense of scale

and allows for far better graphics, it also poses serious questions about the interface and control methods for navigating such terrain. True 3D worlds aren't easy to navigate, and accurately controlling an army of units in these worlds has, to date, never been done right.

Another deviation from tradition that has been added (or taken away, if you will) is resource management. The core "S" of RTS games has been replaced with something called Command Points. These mystical Imperial points are earned through successes in the missions or through



INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → LucasArts
PUBLISHER → LucasArts
RELEASE DATE → December
API SUPPORT → Direct3D

INTEREST GAUGE

INTERESTED ECSTASY AROUSED

THE HYPE

Star Wars geeks rejoice! It's an RTS game in the Star Wars universe that combines stunning visuals and an incredible sense of scale.

THE HURDLE

Among the many, the toughest challenge for this game will be combining the gameplay of an RTS with the looks of a first-person shooter. It hasn't been done well yet. We wonder if it ever will.

THE HIT

As long as *Force Commander* George and pals do their part, and the game doesn't suffer from "Rebellion-itis," then this looks to be a combo that can't go wrong.



With an army of bad-ass AT-ATs, you can quite literally "squash" the rebellion. This feature, more than any of the numerous other ones, will no doubt have SW geeks jumping for joy.



FIVE QUESTIONS

FLASHLIGHT TO THE EYES, SWEAT BEADING ON THE FOREHEAD, **FORCE COMMANDER** PROJECT LEADER GARRY GABER SAT DOWN AND ANSWERED THE VIOLATING FIVE QUESTIONS.

Q: What advantage is gained by taking FC into 3D?

A: You can go down on the battlefield with your units. You can hear the footfalls of an AT-AT alongside you, and see laser fire as enemy Snowspeeders descend upon your formation.

Q: Have you personally played a 3D RTS that you enjoyed? If so, then what were you smoking? If not, how can you make *Force Commander* the exception to the rule?

A: Seriously, I enjoyed *Dune 2*, *Command and Conquer: Red Alert*, *StarCraft*, and *Age of Empires*. I think they have all pushed the genre forward in one way or another, and each was a very satisfying game in its own right. If we can do the same with *Force Commander*, I think we'll have a real enjoyable experience.

Q: Any scenes with Princess Leia in the glow bikini? I think it makes perfect sense, don't you?

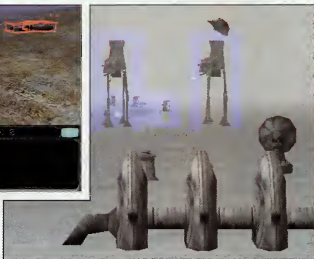
A: Princess Leia shows up in the Forest Camouflage she wore on Endor. What she wore underneath that garment is up to interpretation.

Q: Without resource management, how can you keep the multiplayer game interesting?

A: Resource management! Oh my, I knew we forgot something! But seriously, we've come up with some other things besides micromanaging resources to keep the player interested.

Q: When a band of Ewoks attacks the all-powerful Imperial Stormtroopers, who has the upper hand? Careful, this is a trick question.

A: Both sides would have a reasonable chance of success, but there would almost certainly be some hurting for both parties. (That was a trick answer.)



Presumably units like the AT-ATs and Stormtroopers will actually be able to hit targets in the game — unlike the movies.

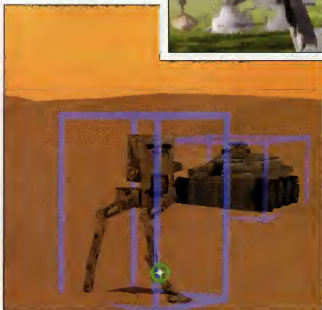
sheer luck in randomly-placed crates. This new method removes problematic issues inherent with strategically managing resources — essentially the desire of most players (not me, of course) to fight. But this omission also takes away some of the freedom in multiplayer games.

I had imagined sending out Imperial Harvesters to mine Endorian crystals, while building multiple barracks and cranking out hundreds of Stormtroopers to send in and take out Aunt Beru and Uncle Owen. But while these visions of *Red Alert* with Star Wars units are enticing, I also admit that viewing the world through the eyes of a Stormtrooper while thunderous AT-ATs walk by is quite intriguing as well.



The last version of *Force Commander* I saw looked as good as any 3D RTS to date. The units were detailed, graphically and statistically, and the varying camera angles were easy to control in order to see the action from numerous views. No matter what the perspective or approach to this game, the real selling point is the units. You will be able to control every unit in the Star Wars universe, from those loathsome Ewoks (when you get the chance to control the Rebels in the multiplayer game) to every marauding mechanical destructor in the Empire. For this fact alone, I am damned excited to get my hands dirty with the Dark Side.

— MIKE SALMON has a very unhealthy urge to squish Ewoks



Getting up close to the action is great for screenshots like this, but unfortunately it takes away a good bit of the control as well.

TIPS FOR THE EMPIRE

In every RTS game there are a few units that are just a waste of time, and from our knowledge of the movie, we've got a few handy tips to keep the Empire from going down yet again.

STORMTROOPERS
OUR TAKE → No matter how cool they look, these robo-idiot can't hit the broadside of a Bantha with a laser rifle at five paces and can be bested by stuffed animals.

DEATH STAR
OUR TAKE → Starting all your missions of units in one easily destroyable space station is just plain stupid -- STUPID I tell ya

AT-ATS
OUR TAKE → Damn, they look cool. But some rope and a Hoth speeder is all it takes to drop these monstrosities.

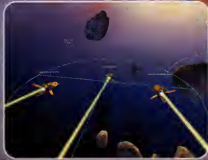


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**"HOMEWORLD SHOULD REWRITE
THE RULES TO THE REAL-TIME
STRATEGY GENRE"**

— *Gamecenter.com*

**"HOMEWORLD IS SET TO EXPLODE
THE RTS GENRE LIKE A FIERY
SUPERNOVA"**

— *CNN.com*



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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD

HISTOGRAM [0] [1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7] [8] [9] [10]

PAST SCORES

WHO ARE THEY?

Lionhead came together after Peter Molyneux's split from EA. They assembled a team of Bullfrog alumnae as well as hotshot programmer Denis Haslebits (co-creator of *Theme Park*) who has since left to form his own company. With Steve Jackson (co-founder of Games Workshop with current Edges Chairman Ian Livingstone) running the business, Lionhead's profile is growing with every mainstream press article.

Black and White

Good and Evil, Sheffield Utd and Sheffield Wednesday, Sandra Bullock and Oprah

Two years ago at the E3 guzzle-fest, in a small room away from the hustle and busts of the deafening booths, the always affable industry legend/games guru/design genius/closet showoff Peter Molyneux unveiled the premise for his new game — in and of itself a noteworthy event. Having built his company, Bullfrog Productions, into an estimated \$60 million entity, Molyneux's resume is littered with smash hits. On the back

of successes like the *Populous* series, *Syndicate*, *Mogk Carpet*, and *Theme Park*, power house Electronic Arts bought the company up and Molyneux was elevated into a senior management role that really didn't suit his creative character and passion for game-making.

Suddenly the Bullfrog sheen of constant high quality was tarnished by misfires. These misses included the chronically rushed racer *Hi Octane* and the seemed-like-a-good-idea-on-paper life sim,

Gene Wars. After the well-publicized drowning of submarine action adventure *Creation*, the wheels seemed to be coming off. Molyneux quit after shipping *Dungeon Keeper* ... finally.

With *B&W*, Molyneux is back to doing what he does best — creating games. That early technology demo at E3 whet appetites and assured another extended spell in the spotlight, as the 18-month development cycle was certain to edge over two years. The technology showcase had little stick figures running around a green screen seeming like a throwback to 286 days, but with amazing AI that had the little buggers given a ball, they worked out that they could kick it, and eventually “evolved” to setup a soccer field in minutes. Graphically *B&W* was

to be amazing — a beautiful rendered landscape was presented as an example of what Lionhead was aiming for. When the “pshaws,” “harrumphs,” and “sherr-rhythms” of the cynical audience subsided, there was the realization that maybe they could get this right.

As the project progresses, the graphical quality has got consistently better — just check out any of these amazing screenshots.

More important is the gameplay, something that has been shrouded in uncertainty. Essentially, *B&W* is an amalgam of concepts pulled from other Molyneux titles — the “god” game format from *Populous*, strategy/life elements from *Gene Wars*, dueling wizards from *Mogk Carpet*, and the potential to be very evil from *Dungeon Keeper*. ▶ P. 69



INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Lionhead Studios
PUBLISHER → EA
RELEASE DATE → Q2 2000
API SUPPORT → DirectX 3D

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

Peter Molyneux's name is as powerful as ever in gaming circles. He's adept at both programming and generating hype.

THE HURDLE

Actually attaining the standards set at the beginning of development will be difficult. *B&W* is an incredibly ambitious design proposition. Keep your fingers crossed.

THE HIT

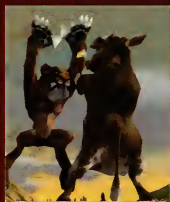
It's Molyneux and his talented crew, and those ideas really are sparking. You're all but guaranteed something pretty unique.

(Top left) Designers at Lionhead have modeled many characters after themselves in this game. Shown here are the team-building exercises on their company weekend.



Black and White Gallery

When titans meet on the battlefield, the fur begins to fly. A vast range of moves make the tortoise versus the cow a more compelling event than the latest Don King-scheduled boxing fiasco.



Architectural files have been picked from a variety of historical settings, ranging from ancient Greece to Egypt, and various Japanese locales. These party animals have more moves than Dan Egger at his high school prom, including a breakdancing ape gettin' his groove on with a cow.

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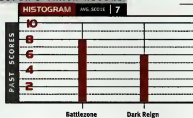
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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



Dark Reign 2

Here comes the Reign again

Real estate — It's the reason our land-grabbing forefathers came here, the reason

we've declared wars, it's why we'll take Whoopi Goldberg in the center square for the block. It's the motive for Qx wanting to kill you, the whole point of Q*bert, and exactly why a first down in football means you're kicking ass.

It's also the basis for an entire, seemingly "dying" genre of PC games called realtime strategy, and precisely why so many other RTS games have never quite captured the magic of protecting the fields, streams, and mountains to which you've laid claim. Unless you can see, feel, and sense the looming mountains, the overhanging cliffs, or the fall of night on a piece of property you'd die to pro-

tect, the sense of blood-boiling outrage when some loser's tank rumbles into your backyard isn't nearly as gripping.

With *Dark Reign 2*, Pandemic Studios is aiming to push our land-lubbing emotions to the surface, and quiet the shrill voices of game industry critics who are seeing Death's scythe sweep over the genre. With a stunning 3D engine that creates changing weather and landscapes, and an engrossing on-the-battlefield camera perspective, everything in *DR2* seems closer, more real.

What's depressingly real, however, is the uninspired storyline —

typical fare with sworn enemies out to deal each other death blows. The sides: The wealthy Jovian Detention Authority (JDA) versus ragtag revolutionaries called the Sprawlers. The JDA has kidnapped the Sprawlers' leader, and now the proletariat types are out for revenge, ready to lay waste to the JDA's biggest city — yadda, yadda, yadda.

Fighting through day, night, and changing weather in 25 missions, you start on terra firma and then spiral out into battles throughout the solar system. Choose your side and build terrific-looking air, land, and sea units like Rumblers, Aqua-

naughts, and Stingers. Though the names sound cliché, the game's unit and base differentiation set it apart from the pack. For instance, some troops are better nighttime fighters, making for strategies like night rushers and day pacifists. Research also allows troops to gain skills and powers. Medic characters, once upgraded, will be able to cast their Mojo spells at opponents, making the enemy wander aimlessly and sending them into a fit of dementia in which they'll shoot at everything around them, friend or foe.

Bases in the game also are modifiable, with your home structures

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Pandemic Studios
PUBLISHER → Activision
RELEASE DATE → Winter 1999
API SUPPORT → Direct3D, Open GL

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

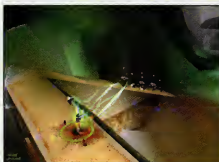
With a gorgeous 3D engine, modifiable bases, and tons of intriguing tweaks on the recently flagging RTS genre, we're actually excited about *DR2*.

THE HURDLE

Though it promises a lot, the game probably won't be out until months after Westwood's *C&C: Tiberian Sun*. And, the complexity of 3D RTS control schemes has yet to be solved.

THE HIT

Though the first *Dark Reign* was nothing to write home about, Pandemic appears to have gone the extra mile to make *DRII* more than just a few new additions.



Dark Reign 2's engine will produce compelling landscapes that affect gameplay. Storm the enemy's mountain pass, use water as a natural barrier, and shoot from on high for a combat advantage.

FIVE QUESTIONS

WE PUT GREG BORRUD, DIRECTOR OF *DARK REIGN 2*, IN THE BLINDING SPOTLIGHT OF PCXL'S CURIOSITY.

Q: How will your product be different from its competitors, such as *Ground Control* and *Warcraft*?

A: We've stuck to the gameplay of a traditional RTS game, meaning there is an equal strategic value to base-building, resource management, deciding what troops you are going to build, and fighting your battles. Base-building and resource management are integral to the strategy of how you play the game. We will make sure that a player has all the strategic options available to play this as a strategy game and not only as a tactical combat game.

Q: What similarities will *DR2* share with *Hard Rain*, with Christian Slater?

A: My old girlfriend was in charge of assets for *Hard Rain* so I probably know more than any man should about Christian Slater.

Q: Medic troops that can adversely affect enemies is a nice addition to the title. Tell us more about it.

A: We wanted to add another benefit to having medics on the battlefield. For example, the medic on the *Sprawler* side is called the Voodoo. He has the primary function of being able to heal infantry units. But he can also "cast" certain Mojos on the enemy. These Mojos are something you can research at your base. Once you have one available, the player can cast it on the enemy to cause different types of damage.

Q: In your opinion, why are RTS games still alive, and what do developers have to do to keep it that way?

A: RTS games are still alive because there is something fundamentally fun about the core gameplay. RTS games appeal to a gamer who likes action and fast-paced gameplay, and yet still prides himself on being smarter than your average first-person shooter fan.

Q: What about C&C: *Tiberian Sun*, and how it will compare to *DR2*?

A: I've been playing a lot of *Tiberian Sun* lately and to be honest, it is a lot better than I expected. I kind of compare *Tiberian Sun* to *Star Wars: Episode 1*. Everyone is waiting for it. Everyone is going to buy it. It can't possibly live up to expectations. But hell, it's C&C, and it's one of the reasons I wanted to make RTS games in the first place. But I think the game offered minor improvements in the genre and in turn they have left a nice big gap for *DR2* to fill.



MRM technology allows players to zoom in on the action from almost any angle.

having module points that will take on upgrades like sensors, defensive turrets, and regenerating armor as you gain wealth and power. Of course, none of this is new, since *StarCraft* has done it to perfection — just not in 3D.

What really makes *DR2* stand out, though, is the 3D engine and impressive graphics. The wholly traditional isometric RTS view is ready, willing, and able for those too staid to forsake it, but using what Intel calls "Multi-Resolution-Mesh" technology, the *DR2* camera can also zoom into the fray from almost any angle, all without a framerate hit. Even close up, the detailed units, spectacular explosions, lighting effects, and weather elements (rain and snow) are really impressive.

But that's not all — oh no siree. The real star of the 3D world is the beautiful terrain and its strategies. Imagine hiding your troops in the shadow of an overhanging cliff, lying in ambush under a jungle canopy, or vigorously defending a narrow, rocky chokepoint that



A variety of land, air, and sea units keep things interesting.



Though it looks as though your day is about to be ruined, medics in the game can help turn the tide with "Mojo" casting abilities.

you've turned into an enemy killing ground.

With 3D worlds like these, and several Internet/LAN multiplayer modes including CTF, Cooperative, Blood Bath (free for all), and King of the Hill, *Dark Reign 2* sends a clear message to the critics calling the genre stagnant. There's life left

for those who care enough to fight the same-old-same-old, and for those willing to defend their land — or at least to get their X in the Whoopi Goldberg square.

— MIKE MORRISSEY's reign as "King of the No-Bo Line Editor" will soon be over

RTS vs. RTS vs. RTS

No game is released in a vacuum (though most WizardWorks titles should be sacked into one), and *Dark Reign 2* is no exception. *Warcraft* and *Ground Control* are just two of the titles that are prepping to give *DR2* a run for its money.



WARTWORN
DEVELOPER → Eyst
PUBLISHER → TBA
RELEASE → Late 1999 — Early 2000

THE SKINNY → An online-focused multiplayer game with huge maps up to 10 km square, and fully customizable units, including a formation editor

LIKE DARK REIGN 2 → Another tanks-and-troops fighting game with 3D maps, several multiplayer modes, and day and night cycles that affect strategies

NOT LIKE DARK REIGN 2 → Mostly an online game based around tournaments with other players, *Warcraft* also has fully changeable units that players can create. The attack planner, formation editor, and customizable skins and insignias for troops and weapons also lend a sense of depth not found in other RTS games, though the graphics aren't as strong

PROJECTED FINISH → Though it looks to be as strong a game as both *Ground Control* and *Dark Reign 2*, *Warcraft* may be hurt by a seemingly never-ending search for a publisher



GROUND CONTROL
DEVELOPER → Massive Entertainment
PUBLISHER → Sierra Studios
RELEASE → Q3 2000

THE SKINNY → Two groups fight for dominance on a 3D planet, with intuitive controls, impressive graphics, and an all new free-floating camera

LIKE DARK REIGN 2 → Fully controllable camera, excellent graphics, and upgradeable units, like troops you can equip with mortars, and cloaking devices for tanks

NOT LIKE DARK REIGN 2 → With no typical resource management built into this game, *Ground Control* focuses on straight-out fighting between troops and mobile weapons. The game also will use a line-of-sight system rather than fog of war, showing you terrain as you explore the map, but also hiding enemy troops and encampments

PROJECTED FINISH → It was already looking great before Sierra snagged the publishing rights. Expect *Ground Control* to give *DR2* a run for the title of top RTS of early 2000

"...the ghoul overwhelmed the hero, clubbing him with their own severed limbs before feasting on his guts. And that was right about the time we knew we couldn't wait to play Nocturne. This game will be causing some hellacious nightmares later this year."

- Computer Gaming world

"It is unforgettable, astonishing, and teasing with riveting visual realism. Yet behind the rich lighting and gossamer fog is a timeless sense of adventure. This is gaming at its best."

- Adrenaline Vault



It is 1933, and in the shadowed world around you there exists an ungodly evil: werewolves, vampires, ghouls and flesh-eating zombies that wait just outside the light's unlocked door to feed upon innocence. There also exist guardians of the good and just, tireless vigilantes capable of tracking down this evil and turning it upon itself. You are one of them. And you hunt, as your vile quarry does, by night.

NOCTURNE

*In the womb of darkness,
a new genre of game is born.*

UNLEASHED HALLOWEEN 1999

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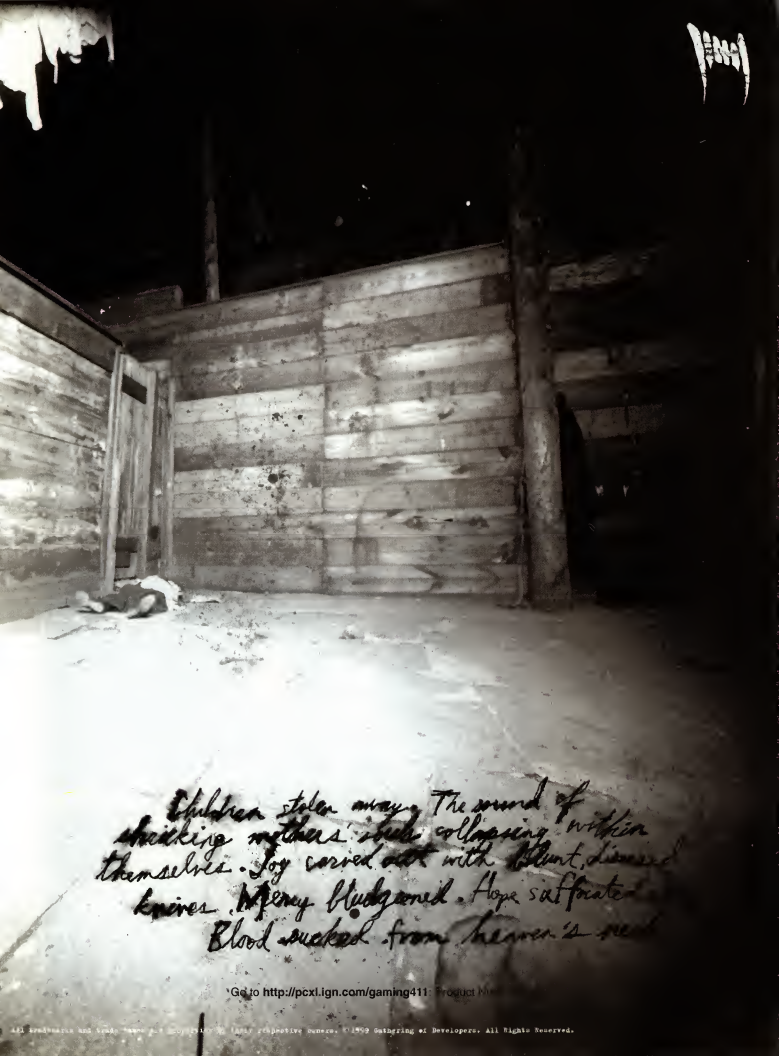


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WARNING!

This game contains strong scenes of
excessive violence, language and nudity.
Suitable for mature audiences only.

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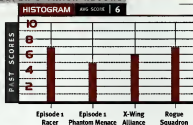


Children stolen away. The sound of
shaking mothers' skulls collapsing within
themselves. Joy carved out with blunt, dented
knives. Infancy bludgeoned. Hope suffocated.
Blood sucked from heaven's nest.

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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine

"Raiders Of The Lost Tomb" or "Tomb Raider For Women"?

For the *Indiana Jones* series of games, this is the next logical step. Plans call for a true 3D adventure where Indy races through traps and searches for treasure in a fully rendered, highly detailed 3D world. One small problem, however — LucasArts has been beaten to the punch. Lara Croft and her *Tomb Raider* series unapologetically stole the concept, the worlds, storylines, traps,

and even some of the clothing that made *Indiana Jones* such a unique license. When *Tomb Raider* first came out in 1995, and sold gazillions, well, you can just imagine the horror and collective "dohs" which likely swept through the LucasArts office. We can picture the meeting, with statements like, "Why didn't we think of that?" "It's Indiana Jones with breasts," "Damn them Brits!" and of course, "At

least we've got
Star Wars."

Speculation aside, *Indiana Jones* has a legitimate, high-profile rival adventurer in the gaming world with which the quest for this "Infernal Machine" must compete.

Proving that turnabout is fair play, LucasArts has ripped off the gameplay of *Tomb Raider*, right down to the moving of blocks, grabbing of ledges, and third-person perspective spelunking. Even the storyline and goals of the game seem quite familiar. Indy must travel through desert, jungle, lava, and snow-covered levels to find the varying pieces to this "Infernal Machine" and put them all

together. One difference is that each piece of this machine actually acts as a supernatural weapon all by itself.

Along Indy's journeys he must jump chasms, shoot bad guys (people only, since shooting animals is far more offensive), ride mine-carts, and figure out archaic puzzles (archaic in the Egyptian sense, not in the "It's really stupid" sense), with only his wits and whip. Of course, suggesting that *Indiana Jones* ripped this off from *Tomb Raider* is ridiculous, since the *Indiana Jones* movies were the basis for this type of adventure.

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → LucasArts
PUBLISHER → LucasArts
RELEASE DATE → December
API SUPPORT → DirectX3D

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

The first-ever fully 3D *Indiana Jones* adventure will take you into the world of the *Raiders* movies, with a twisting plot, fast action, and ingenious puzzles.

THE HURDLE

Tomb Raider has been doing this for four years. Other than the main character not having breasts, there isn't much that is obviously different.

THE HIT

Indiana Jones is the original *Tomb Raider* and the license is still powerful to gamers of all ages. That alone ensures that this should be one of the hits of '99.



Indiana Jones' "to do" list — Get run over by a train, drive on two wheels, swim with sharks, jump with glee, and talk to half-naked midgits.

FIVE QUESTIONS

INDIANA JONES PRODUCER HAL BARWOOD TALKED TO US ABOUT GAMES AND BEING NICE TO WOMEN.

Q: What is your favorite action/adventure game on the PC (not counting this game) and why?

A: I loved the original *TR*. Otherwise, PC pickings are lean. If there were any titles out there, I'd just sit back and play 'em. Instead, I'm forced to build one.

Q: What is the future of this genre?

A: I'm betting we'll see technology fade as a driving force over time. As that happens, the opportunity to distinguish our titles by other means will become important — for which I nominate storytelling, action/adventure's natural partner.

Q: Why no multiplayer?

A: We realized that finishing the levels and the testing process would drain our project of the time and effort needed for the single-player game. Saved for next time, with any luck.

Q: Who'd win in a fight: Indiana Jones or Lara Croft? And why?

A: Indy's pretty handy with fists, whips, guns, and explosives, but he's reluctant to get into a scrap unless he's in real trouble. As to Ms. Croft — this may seem old-fashioned, but I can't imagine Indy striking a woman. I think he'd just show her a good time.

Q: The *Jedi Knight* engine is looking long in the tooth. Is it possible to upgrade the engine enough to make the game look up to standard?

A: The *Jedi* engine has been around since ... well, *Jedi*. Our programmers used it as a starting point, and the result is the *Jones* engine. We developed a superior lighting model, rendering system, collision system, sound system, we push more than 100 times as many polygons, and we scale to perform well on (relatively) slow and fast machines.



Silly there none of your killing of Nazis, don't you think? Nope, you only get to kill Russkies in this game.

While the gameplay is very similar to *Tomb Raider*, there are several differences that should help the game stand out. According to Hal Barwood, "The key difference for *Indy* is that it has a great and logical storyline, which is developed and brought out through in-game cutscenes. Plus, the strength of the Indiana Jones character makes this quite different."

Another key point of differentiation is the control mechanism. The frustrating switching camera angles of *Tomb Raider* have been avoided by making the onscreen *Indy* transparent whenever he gets in the way of the action. This makes a huge difference when you're backed up next to a wall, trying to fight an enemy. The controls have been designed to limit frustration and make the action parts easier for newbies who'll no doubt swarm to the title on the back of its gold-plated license.

The game doesn't require a 12-fingered ambidextrous alien in order to perform special moves;

instead the game engine does much of the work for you. For example, when jumping to a ledge all you have to do is press jump — *Indy* will automatically latch onto the edge rather than stupidly smash into a cliff and fall to his death. This means the real satisfaction comes from exploration, battling the Russian baddies behind the evil plot, figuring out puzzles, and avoiding traps.

The graphics and gameplay all seem to be in good working order and the in-game cutscenes have accurately captured the cinematic appeal of the movies. That said, the key to *Indiana Jones'* success depends on the depth and variety of the puzzles and interaction with enemies. For some, *Tomb Raider* with the *Indiana Jones* license is all this game really needs to be, but if *Indy* is to stand on its own with the more discerning gamer, it HAS to be more than mere.

— MIKE SALMON now calls the PCXL team "The Infernal Machine"

INFERNAL MACHINES

Machines were created to make life easier on man, but in many cases exactly the opposite has happened. We chronicle a few "infernal machines" and tell you how man can best these mean machines.

BREATHALYZER

WHAT IT DOES → Used by police, wives, parents, and AA support groups to determine how much of your blood is actually alcohol.

WHY IT'S EVIL → Sadly, you don't get rewarded for the highest score.

HOW TO BEAT IT → Take the test quickly, or certainly before the last three drinks you downed settle in — it'll save you a few points.

POLYMERGRAPH

WHAT IT DOES → Mysteriously measures your biorhythms to see if you're lying like a rug.

WHY IT'S EVIL → Ruins what would have been a perfectly good alibi.

HOW TO BEAT IT → If you truly believe your lies, then it will too.

THE IMAC

WHAT IT DOES → Sits there looking like a damn plastic lifesaver.

WHY IT'S EVIL → Allows yuppies to join the computer age, thereby ruining our exclusive club of computer geeks.

HOW TO BEAT IT → Stop buying the damn things and they'll go away.

VIBRATOR

WHAT IT DOES → Uses batteries to replace men.

A truly horrifying combination: The vibrator. Pleasures the woman and matches her designer computer. Yikes!

WHY IT'S EVIL → Didn't you read what it does? **HOW TO BEAT IT** → Tell her it "clashes" with her shoes.



(Left) *Indy* tries to wake Calista Flockhart from a nap. "I've got a bad feeling about this. Oops, wrong movie." (Right) "Puzzles, puzzles, puzzles! Damn Puzzles! Why did they have to be puzzles?"



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Grand Canyon Road
Administration: ATP
George: Best Man
Katherine: Bug
The Age of Kings
Civilization
CyberStrike Now: CA
Electronic Arts: Cast
Horse: Spooked
Championship
With: West Shootout
Combat: Simulator
Crime Cities: CyberStrike
D.O.G.: Dawn of Aces
Daytona USA: Deluxe
Dead Reckoning: De
Hunter 2: DemonSta
Descent III: Descen
FreeSpace: Great Wa
DethKar: Die by th
Sword: Driver: Drive
Education: Ed Hunter
European: Air War
Expendable: Extreme Tr
Motorcross: F1 Raci
Simulation: F22 Total
War: Falcon 4.0: Field
Stream Trophy Bass 3D
Fighter Ace 1.1: Fight
Squadron The Screami
Demons Over Europe
Final Countdown: Flig
Sim 2000: Simulator 9
Flight Unlimited II: Fly
Corps Gold: Forsaken
Front Page Sports S
Racing: Front Page Spor
Trophy Bass II: Fro
Page Sports Trophy Rive
Grand Prix: Legends
Grand Touring: Hea
Gear: Heavy Gear 2
Waters: H.E.D.
John XS Racing
Robert's Gra
Explosion
CyberStrike
K.O.: Mad Racer: Mad
NASCAR: MDA: Me
Midnight
Madness: M
Monaco Grand P
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OPPONENTS BEFORE
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Terrorize



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Target sited 600 meters out
wind - 5 knots
out of the west
2 rounds left in
the MAGAZINE
If the 1st one misses,
the 2nd one WON'T

DELTA FORCE

YOU CAN RUN BUT YOU'LL
JUST DIE TIRED

Available Fall 1999



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Oh, The Games Out There Are Frightful ...

As we all know, only losers and people from Kansas actually go to the mall on the day after Thanksgiving. Why put up with thousands of Hallmark figurines and Toughskin jeans when it's so much easier to put your shopping off until the last minute? That's the way the games market has been for years too, with horrible titles squirting out in November in a feeble attempt to nab your cash before the real games come out in December. But believe or not, this year you'll have to include a few developers and publishers in your pre-meal grace. *Starfleet Command* and *Independence War Deluxe* won high praise from our reviewers, as did *Tiberian Sun* and *Drakan*, despite their lukewarm scores. Be thankful PCXL is here to protect you from the holiday game dregs, because we're not afraid to roast and baste a bad game.



Alert! Turkeys are on the attack!

WHAT THE NUMBERS MEAN

A 43-41 overtime football game on Thanksgiving day, followed by the perfect white meat drumstick **10**

Having two football games on a Thursday afternoon when you're home from work. Almost as good as it gets **9**

A giant meal with family, but also listening to Uncle Roger's "I was a POW in a tiger cage" stories all night **8**

A solid game but enough flaws to keep it from reaching greatness. Like turkey from a can **7**

Better than most but with serious flaws. Like Grandma before she started talking to dead Little Rascals **6**

Halfway between ass and sass. This game would cook mashed potatoes, then cover them with Cheez Whiz **5**

Slightly worse than average. Like a plate full of great food, but having to eat it at the kid's table **4**

One appetizer does not make a three-course meal. A brief shining moment, followed by hours of suckage **3**

Cranberry Sauce. It kinda tastes like a dessert, but it also kinda tastes like ass-flavored jello **2**

Like the turkey being burned to blackened crisp and then finding out the only restaurant open is Arby's **1**

KILLER GAME

Any game that receives a 9 or so from our rigorous scoring system warrants this nifty logo. If you see the **PC ACCELERATOR** Killer Game stamp, you know it's a game worth buying. Only the true classics deserve this elite status, so don't expect to see this symbol often.



SUICIDE

If we're going to create a stamp for the truly great, then it's only fair to label the undesirable shit as well. It takes an abominable score of 1 or 2 to qualify for the noose around the neck. Heed our warning: Stay away from these games at all costs.



40MM4

These are the games that make your mouth water, your tongue wag, and your drool flow. They burst with more flavor than Mt-C Eco Cooler.

Star Trek: Starfleet Command

Publisher → Interplay Productions

Developer → 14 Degrees East

Rating → 8

How good is it? Major kudos for taking a hex-based war game and making it fun, but also for goose-pimply graphics and pretty explosions.

Independence War: Deluxe Edition

Publisher → Infogrames

Developer → Particle Systems

Rating → 8

How good is it? Some of the best space sim graphics we've seen, a genuine story, and an expansion pack, all for \$90.

Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun

Publisher → EA

Developer → Westwood

Rating → 6

How good is it? We found flaws, but it's still been the most-played game in our offices the last few weeks.

Drakan

Publisher → Pygmalion

Developer → Surreal Software

Rating → 7

How good is it? While we gagged at the ending and could do without the buggy Internet play, *Drakan* offered huge outdoor levels and unique gameplay.

CR00MM4

It's a million awful chain restaurants like Olive Garden, Chili's, and TGI Fridays rolled into one. Drop-by these bad boys and feed them to the fat kid next door.

Mob Rule

Publisher → Simon & Schuster

Developer → Studio 3

Rating → 5

How bad is it? Yes, these are a few funny moments and decent graphics, but we haven't had to micromanage this much crap since *Theme Hospital*.

Braveheart

Publisher → Edios

Developer → Red Lemon

Rating → 4

How bad is it? How could a license from our favorite movie turn into this buggy, overcomplicated pile of sheep dung?

NBA Inside Drive 2000

Publisher → Microsoft

Developer → High Voltage Software

Rating → 6

How bad is it? After winning 14 games by an average score of 235-174, you'll understand why it's here.

Civilization II: Test of Time

Publisher → Hasbro Interactive

Developer → Microprose

Rating → 5

How bad is it? Why, yes, we'd like to pay another \$40 to play *Civilization* all over again, including graphics that are so 1993, you can actually taste the Crystal Pepsi.

ACCELE-RATED >>

This additional rating provides specific information on how a game performs on a variety of competing 3D chipsets. We test games on up to four major 3D cards and report back with the true test for any 3D accelerator: how it affects the game. We base these ratings on graphic enhancements, framerates, and performance to give you a good idea of how a game will perform on your 3D card.

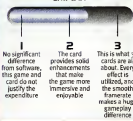
(Note: Performance may vary depending on the card and the setup of your system.)

RATINGS >>

Our rating scale is a simple 1 to 10 — no decimal points, no obscure percentages, just a straight score that gets right to the point. Before we score games, they undergo countless hours of testing on different systems, with different 3D cards — our reviewers even play the games under the influence of various narcotics. In the end we stamp a single score on the game, which is essentially a numeric value of the game's worth. We love games and always try to look on the bright side, but when a pile of steaming crap comes in, we won't hold back and allow our readers to waste their money on said crap. You can count on our reviews for honesty, insight, and maybe even a few laughs.

ACCELE-RATED

CHIPSET



GRAPHICS

Rendering quality, framerates, and special effects all contribute to an immersive gaming experience.

SOUND

Visceral sound effects and appropriate music can help make a good game great.

DEPTH

How often and how long you find yourself playing a game are good indicators of its quality.

DESIGN

The backbone of a game is the overall vision behind it, from characters and weapons to levels and missions.

RATING



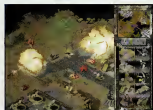
DEVELOPER → Westwood
PUBLISHER → Westwood
REQUIRED → P200, 32MB RAM, 90MB hard drive
IDEAL → PII 333, 128MB RAM, DSL/Cable Modem

C&C: Tiberian Sun

It's like the diet cola of fun — just one calorie, not fun enough

ACCELE-RATED

Another non-accelerated game here.



A short recap of the (long) *Tiberian Sun* development history: Two schools of thought were considered when designing the sequel to the best selling series of RTS games ever. One camp wanted to be innovative — to introduce new gameplay elements and take the franchise a much-needed step forward. The other camp didn't like messing with the basic formula, figuring that gamers would just want more of the same old-same old. (EA, are you listening?) Cue internal conflict and lead designer Eric Yeo leaving ("to pursue other career goals"). Uh-oh, can you see what's coming? The second camp won and *Tiberian Sun* is a perfect recreation of their closeted thinking.

Without being overly negative right out the gate, if the idea of playing "Red Alert with more

stuff" doesn't grab you, you're better off looking at something like *StarCraft* or even *Myth*. So let's get the surface changes out of the way first. As you might expect, the graphics are improved with higher resolutions, more color depth, and cooler special effects. And the all-new 3D terrain blows up, catches on fire, and changes in numerous ways through the course of battle. And, uh ... (still trying to think of more important changes) ... you've got lots more units and buildings which, for the most part, are different from the previous games (see sidebar for more details).

THE POINTLESSNESS OF TANK RUSHING

Although the feel of the game is essentially unchanged, and the look has been merely aesthetically adjusted as allowed by faster technology, the pace and flow of the gameplay certainly has changed

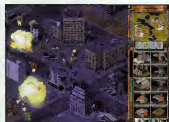
— for the worse. The strategic focus has taken a turn towards defensive-minded play, favoring Sim-Base style turtlers rather than creative offensive tactics. It's a stark contrast from the famed tank rushes of old.

The ease and effectiveness of setting up your base as a giant tank factory/cranking out dozens of them/sending them all on a mad-dash for glory was one of the main complaints directed against *Red Alert*. Well apparently the developers got sick of hearing everyone whine "tank rushes are too powerful and too lame," because man, did they overcompensate. It's now completely futile to tank rush. It's so ridiculously easy to thwart a rush, even if vastly outnumbered, that it's pointless to go through the time and effort (not to mention the risk) of mounting a giant offensive force.

Units such as the NOD artillery show how easy it is to avert a rush. In a blatant ripoff of *StarCraft*'s siege tanks (they look the same and even have a similar animation), these units can deploy as fixed emplacements, capable of hitting



Damn! All this fuss over a bunch of green rocks? Why can't we all just get along and play *Everquest*?



Tonight on Fox News: "When Good Franchises Go Bad." What can you do to stop this horrible plague over the gaming world?

targets at extreme long range. Just a few of these can take out vast numbers of slow-moving tanks or infantry, or at least thin out their ranks, so that wiping out the remnants will be much easier. In case the artillery doesn't completely destroy 'em, the EMP Cannon (which both sides can build and will zap mechanical units so they cannot move or act) will render them impotent. Another example is the NOD stealth technology, which can cloak an entire base and all the units inside, making effective recon of defenses more difficult.

ALL NEW PLAYTHINGS

The new tech and buildings are extrapolated from the first game's technology, with some new variations. The GDI have a **Plasma generator**, which raises an impenetrable force field for a small duration. The NOD's main perk is the **stealth generator**, and it has chemical weapons at its disposal too, made from harvesting thierium waste.

As for the units, here's a brief breakdown of the changes from the Strategy section for more details.

GDI:

JUMP JET INFANTRY: Think Tribes — these flying fighters annoy an enemy lacking air defenses, but are easily killed.

TITAN: A big, slow mech with a long range gun (think heavy tank).

WOLVERINE: Smaller, faster mechs with machine guns.

HOVER TANK: Fast and versatile, can travel over ice floes but pretty weak.

DISRUPTOR: A tank that fires a slow-moving energy ray that burns over time.

ORCA BOMBER: The most effective air unit in the game; great at destroying artillery and infantry.

MAMMOTH: The super unit of GDI. It is almost invincible but toys with a Q*-style railgun.

NOD:

CYBORG: Tough infantry with machine guns; can't be squished by vehicles.

TICK TANK: Medium tanks that can entrench themselves to become immobile but much tougher (Gee, wonder where they got their idea).

ARTILLERY: A long range unit that is devastating when deployed.

SUBTERRANEAN APC: Can carry up to five infantry; good when combined with engineers or the Cyber Commando.

DEVIL'S TONGUE: These hovering tanks are great against infantry with their short range flamethrowers.

BANSHEE: A flying saucer that zips around; good when grouped.

CYBER COMMANDO: NOD's super unit. It's like the Titans but much tougher. Devs: trying against buildings and units like



3D TERRAIN

Ah yes, one of the bullet points for the box, the buzzword "3D Terrain." *Tiberian Sun* makes good with the hills, cliffs, roads, and other tilesets that will slow units down or speed them up accordingly. The chokepoints and cliff-faces created by this terrain provide numerous tactical possibilities. But again, the new units make it easier to defend an area, rather than attack a base — unless you can set up some long range units on a high hill. Destroying bridges is cool too, so pity the fool who sends his whole force over a bridge with an engineer waiting to bring it down — that's just asking for it.

WELL, AT LEAST THERE'S MULTIPLAYER, RIGHT?

Tiberian Sun's single-player game, consisting of 12 missions per side (with eight optional missions, for a total of 20 each) is forgettable for a variety of reasons: from frustrating/boring objectives to the unwatchable cutscenes. How bad are the scenes? They make *Wing Commander* (the movie) look like *Citizen Kane*. Why didn't they stick to the rendered scenes of the first one, which set the mood far more effectively? But hey, when has C&B been about anything else but multiplayer?



Note: Objects in screenshots are smaller than they appear.



Worn-out relics of the early '90s: Drum and bass, Dee-Lite, '70s retro clothing, and gameplay in *Tiberian Sun*.

So, it was with some relief that we turned to multiplayer mode, hoping that at the very least, it would play like a juiced-up *Red Alert*. So much for that idea. As mentioned earlier, the balance has been thrown way out of whack, so that it's relatively easy and successful to play defense and turtle in, especially as NOD, with its stealth generator and artillery.

First of all, this favors NOD so much that no one from PCXL ever picked GDI voluntarily in a multiplayer game (aside from Rob, who's crap at RTS games). Secondly, the defensive array turns most games into long, tedious wars of attrition where the most damage is done in sneak attacks by the "super units" like the Cyber Commando. The slow pace is exacerbated by latency issues, which made the game crawl at snail's pace even on "fastest" mode. *Red Alert* never suffered from this issue, and while it may be

improved in a patch, framerates often plummet when numerous units are on screen.

The bottom line is that gameplay in *Tiberian Sun*, while moderately entertaining, is sooooo 1992. It was fine then, but watching those stupid harvesters trundle back and forth while clicking on little squares is getting old. It's disappointing in every sense, considering the high expectations we had for this game.

— ED LEE *got thrown out of Wing Commander (the movie)*

GRAPHICS

Resolutions are better but the color scheme is muddy, causing the tiny infantry to get lost.

SOUND

Decent combat sounds, and the return of EVA the computer voice is welcome.

DEPTH

Single-player is a no-show; multiplayer is what you make of it.

DESIGN

First designed in 1992, reshaped with new units for *Red Alert*, reshaped with new units again for *TS*.

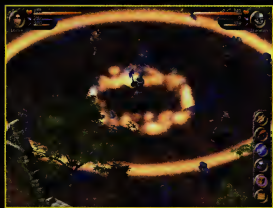
RATING

+ Pluses

- New units
- New strategies
- New, uh... title

- Minuses

- Too easy to defend and play "Sim Base"
- Virtually no innovation involved
- Lag issues in multiplayer



You are Locke D'Averam, a once proud warrior-prince executed for failing to perform a ritual sacrifice. 10,000 years later, you've been resurrected from the dead by a prominent warlord to rescue his kidnapped daughter.

You are now part of a very special breed of warrior. You are a revenant. In order to regain full strength, you'll need to practice the problem-solving ability necessary to unlock forgotten skills.



And though there may be the whole island of Ahkuilon to explore, and more than 40 monsters to destroy, there's only one Locke D'Averam. And however you choose to live as Locke, we think you'll agree: Life is better the second time around.

- ④ Immerse yourself in a gripping storyline involving the future of the entire world of Ur
- ④ Enjoy explosive spell casting effects unparalleled in any other CRPG game
- ④ Extensive NPC interaction enables you to discover who you once were
- ④ Multiple modes of combat include stealth, hand-to-hand, bow and weapon
- ④ Thousands of 3D animations bring the inhabitants of Ahkuilon, as well as breathtaking combat moves, to life
- ④ Choose from 4 character classes in multi-play mode



Check out the interactive demo at
www.eidos.com

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all the tools
you need to
make your
own custom
levels

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EIDOS
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DEVELOPER → Surreal Software
PUBLISHER → Psygnosis
REQUIRED → P56, 32MB RAM,
 300MB hard drive, D3D card
IDEAL → P114, 450, 128MB RAM,
 400MB hard drive, 12MB+ D3D card,
 3D sound card

Drakan: Order of the Flame

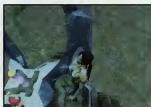
Come on and ride me, big boy

ACCELE-RATED

Simply a damn gorgeous game.



API SUPPORT: Direct3D, Glide



Here's Rynn, reaching for the family jewels.



The game is nothing if not impressively picturesque.

Well, so much for Lara Croft. While she raids her bland tombs in a

sorely outdated engine, another younger, curvier, and more luscious heroine has stepped up to the plate. Part dragon flight sim, part hack-and-slash action adventure, *Drakan* offers up all kinds of goodness, ranging from lead character Rynn's impeccable ass to excellent controls and the most gorgeous landscapes out there.

Drakan's worlds cover winter-scapes, tropical island paradises, oppressive lava-filled caverns, subterranean halls, huge bodies of water and more. Lighting effects are superb, whether it be sunlight, lantern, or fire light in dank dungeons, or fiery attacks from Rynn's dragon partner, Arokh. Character animation is generally good, although many creatures look rather blocky in spots. Also, extensive use of heavy fogging keeps framerates high, but at the expense of limited visibility.

Controlling Rynn both on foot and when mounted on Arokh is managed in masterful fashion, using the same control layout for each play style (running and flying). Attacking is easy and fast-paced, and both characters are remarkably maneuverable. While it's unfortunate that the gun-less Rynn lacks any ability to grab ledges and pull herself up, she can



A giant becomes perplexed at the little human with the big stick.

roll, jump, flip, and sneak past enemies. A myriad of swords, clubs, axes, and bows are found as both pay-offs to tough melees, or in the many hidden coves that require extensive exploration to uncover. Some are magical, and most have durability ratings as they weaken with use.

Puzzles are generally item- and switch-based, and are usually pretty simple. From a pure game-play and aesthetic perspective, *Drakan* is a resounding success — even the music is excellent. But, sadly it's not perfect. First, Rynn's breasts are larger than her personality. She's a hot chick looking for her brother and killin' anything in the way — and that's about it. There's just enough plot to keep moving through each of the four areas (subdivided into about 11 levels), but the ending is atrocious, lacking any resolution.

The other big issue is bugs. In addition to crashes and lousy Internet play, rampant clipping problems dominate; weapons and potions will occasionally fall into the scenery and characters appear through objects at times. The monster AI is also questionable. While they'll humorously run away from Arokh at times, any "intelligent" behavior you spy is almost always scripted. Monsters are aggressive when attacking, but get stuck on scenery, fail to notice Rynn, or simply stand there like idiots.

Still, even with its flaws and warts, *Drakan* is an entertaining

and beautiful game. Despite delays, it was still released too early, though the 15MB multiplayer patch will help (and should be available by the time you read this). But the decent single-player game will tide you over.

— JASON D'APRILE has a crush on Rynn. Go figure ...

GRAPHICS

Incredibly beautiful landscapes are the highlight.

SOUND

Nice music and sound effects, fun monster and dragon voice acting, but Rynn's voice could use more spark.

DEPTH

The mix of dragon flight and traditional third-person action make it feel different, and the worlds are huge.

DESIGN

Familiar level and world design, with decent puzzles and a ton of weapons to overcome enemies.

RATING 7

+ Pluses

- Great curves! The game worlds are cool too
- Lots to do, see, kill, quest for, kill
- Dual-purpose control

- Minuses

- Numerous clipping problems
- Very buggy Internet play
- Rynn needs more personality and the ending is cheap

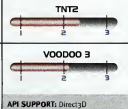
DEVELOPER → 14 Degrees East
 PUBLISHER → Interplay Productions
 REQUIRED → P300 (without 3D acceleration), P466 (with 3D acceleration), 32MB RAM, 250MB hard drive
 IDEAL → PIII 300, 64MB RAM, TNT2

Star Trek: Starfleet Command

To boldly go and put the smack down

ACCELE-RATED

Don't condemn the turn-based strategy genre when it can throw out graphics like this. The ship textures are detailed and any 3D card improves on the software mode.



Ships explode in fiery graphical infernos.

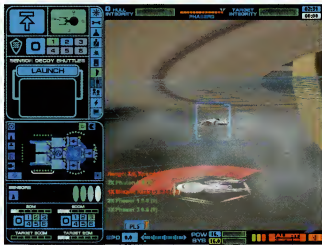


An Orion uses defensive tractors to fend off your missile. Pointy ears are not required for this maneuver.

Starfleet Command takes the daunting task of converting *Star Fleet Battles*, a hideously complicated hex-based wargame, into a manageable, detailed, and slobberingly beautiful tactical combat game. Billed as a realtime strategy game, the focus is firmly on engagements of no more than three ships per player, as you take the commanding role for one of six races (the Federation, Klingons, Romulans, Gorn Confederation, Hydran Kingdom, and the Lyrans-Who-Shoulda-Been-Kzintis-But-Weren't-For-Licensing-Reasons).

Until you learn the game's considerable roster of key commands, a multi-function display gives mouse-click access to a plethora of weapon and control systems, including phaser batteries, photon torpedo tubes, missile racks, transporters, tactical scanners, security teams, and a host of race-specific weapons.

Every moment of *Starfleet Command* is a dual challenge, trying to manage your ship-wide energy and hammer the enemy. Each ship-board system makes demands of the available energy at any given moment. Coordinating your speed and maneuverability is crucial to bringing various weapons to bear



You've got phasers and photons, don't just sit there, chase him!

on the target as often as possible. Aside from managing shields and guns, you can mess with your enemy's sensors, leaving nuclear space mines and shuttles packed with missiles in your wake. You can hit your enemies with imploding warheads, tractor-beam them into stationary bombs, or even board hostile ships and knock out their weapons with space marines.

No less impressive than the game's many combat options are the super-crisp representations of the starships themselves, which lumber about like capital ships (as they should), lurch into turns, spew glowing plasma when damaged, and blow up in breathtaking, wrath-of-God explosions.

There are a few problems, mostly in single-player mode. The well-meaning tutorial missions are rushed — veteran gamers won't have enough to do, and relative newbies can easily stray into situations not covered by "the book." Even hardcore gamers may be foggy on how the single-player campaign structure works and may continue accepting each new mission without a sense of what else to do.

SFB vets will be saddened at the lack of such races as the Orion Pirates, Kzintis, or the Tholians, as well as certain tactics (an obvious way to go in reverse, for one). In

spite of these relatively small holes, *Starfleet Command* is the most thorough and beautiful thing to happen to Trek-based computer games yet.

— CHRIS HUDAK has too much Kirk, and not enough Picard

GRAPHICS

Fabulous. Every starship is detailed and blows up like a sonofabitch.

SOUND

A mix of new sound and classic effects from the series and films.

DEPTH

Starship command down to the very last subsystem.

DESIGN

An almost perfect translation of the classic Trek board game.

RATING

+ Pluses

- Scalable graphics and wicked-bad explosions
- Ships move perfectly
- No tedious bookkeeping

Minuses

- Vague campaign structure and missing races
- Game played on 2D plane
- No Tholians (only real Trek fans would understand)



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DEVELOPER → Red Storm
PUBLISHER → Red Storm
REQUIRED → P200, 32MB RAM, 4X CD-ROM, 150MB hard drive
IDEAL → P233, 64MB RAM, 500MB hard drive, 6X CD-ROM

Force 21

Where America goes out for Chinese

ACCELE-RATED

OK, here's another beef with the game: It runs helluva slow! It supports 3D accelerators for the terrain and special effects, but it doesn't seem to speed the game up any. Standard RTS functions like scrolling the map often causes some annoying stuttering.



API SUPPORT: Direct3D, Glide

Possibly the biggest disappointment for a game reviewer is playing a good game that could have been so much better. *Force 21* is a prime example. It displays so many bad decisions, missed opportunities, and poor implementation that even while I was enjoying the game, the nagging voice in the back of my head kept picking up features that could have been implemented so much better.

The storyline of this 3D RTS puts you in command of either a combined U.S./Russian or Chinese Army in the year 2015. It seems that the Chinese have invaded Kazakhstan (to force its leaders to make the country's name easier to spell, of course). The Kazakhs appeal to the Russians for help, who in turn appeal to the U.S., and pretty soon everyone's involved in a shootin' match. Whichever side

you choose, you'll move through a linear campaign covering the conquest (or defense) of Kazakhstan and surrounding nations.

Most of the game is played from a Myth-like overhead isometric perspective. The interface for controlling the battlefield and a larger strategic map is extremely simple and quite effective. The game looks terrific, with neat animations and weapons effects, especially the streak of TOW missiles and the cute little camouflage shelters that units erect.

So far so good, right? I'm zipping through the first few missions, shuffling units to maximize their impact, and learning to use the waypoint system. Then things start breaking down. First, despite briefings that promise interesting objectives like capturing and defending specific points on the map, all the missions seem to be the same — destroy every enemy unit on the battlefield.

Also, a troop commander in 2015 should get accurate information. One U.S. mission asks you to defend a small Kazakh town from an advancing column of Chinese troops. I get my men into a good position, scout the terrain, and ... no column! Unit AI is also a bit of a mess. Troops' pathfinding makes them cut wide swaths around any obstacle, even if you want them concealed behind it. Units being fired on while traveling will swivel their turrets and fire back, but don't stop moving, thus exposing their weak rear armor.

The loss of units also doesn't impact the campaign or even your career. If you win with one tank or your whole platoon surviving, you always start the next mission with exactly the same resources, and losing merely means you have to replay it.

But, the strategic gameplay still manages to be fun. Overcoming the game's quirks to pull off a really good combined arms maneuver or finally figuring out the complicated Apache helicopters, gives you an indication how great

this game could have been. As it stands now, though, *Force 21* is merely another one of gaming's "Might-Have-Beens."

— *After his third tequila shooter Allen Rausch didn't remember much about turning 21*

ACRONYMS

In the spirit of *Force 21*, we suggest these abbreviations for use by the gaming community

FAKEBULPOINT → Fake Bullet Points used for made-up features like "Blast Processing," "Liquid AI," and "Twice as intense as Quake II"

WIO → When It's Done. A release date meaning "When we start missing payments on our Ferrari"

DISPEXASS → Displays Extreme Ass — e.g. anything by HeadGames

FEMCHARENEMBERS → Main Female Character has Enormous Breasts

CHACH → Not Joanie's boyfriend, but trinkets sent out by PR types — abbreviation of tschotchkes

GRAPHICS

Lovely rendered units and weapons effects, though occasionally tough to tell good guys from bad guys.

SOUND

Good, but all the Chinese guys sound like the Trade Federation aliens from *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace*.

DEPTH

Missions are mostly the same and individual battles have no effect on the course of the war.

DESIGN

Missions aren't that difficult; briefings (and recon information) are occasionally frustratingly inaccurate.

RATING

+ Pluses

- Lots of cool units
- Solid graphics engine
- Good interface

- Minuses

- Chinese accents a bit thick
- Freaky pathing and AI
- No infantry units



OK, who moved a Welsh fishing village to Kazakhstan?

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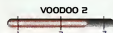
DEVELOPER →	Acclaim Studios
PUBLISHER →	Acclaim Entertainment
REQUIRED →	P200, 33MB RAM, 4x CD-ROM, 102MB hard drive, 4MB 3D accelerator card
IDEAL →	P11 400, 128MB RAM, 12MB+ 3D accelerator card

Re-Volt

I enjoy driving ... and occasionally steering too

ACCELE-RATED

The slickest 3D card effects since the last *Need for Speed* let *Re-Volt* show off any good card.



API SUPPORT: Direct3D



Here's a fascinating look at the back room of your local supermarket.



It's a real shame these dinos don't come to life ...

For a quirky arcade-style, remote-controlled car racer, Acclaim's *Re-Volt* does almost everything right. Almost.

It starts with a really good idea — racing RC cars around real world environments. It's got lush accelerator-only graphics to rival *Need For Speed: High Stakes*, great sound effects, a swathe of RC cars to test drive, and a host of well-designed, entertaining tracks. It even feels like RC car racing — possibly too much.

The car physics are more than a little over the top, with blatantly rampant over-steering and slippery controls. Granted, RC cars tend to feel this way. But even with four different control options (console, arcade, sim, and junior), and after trying keyboards, gamepads, force feedback joysticks, and steering wheels, there wasn't the tight control that makes a racing game instinctively playable. The greater irony here is that the Nintendo 64 version controls to perfection.

That aside, everything else about the game is damn slick. *Re-Volt* is easily among the best looking racers out there, with a ton of eye candy covering the tracks and shiny cars. The game sports a hefty variety of tracks (around 50)



Slick floors and precious artifacts make for great reckless driving.

that take you through the 'burbs, a spooky museum, the supermarket, toy store, parks, and other locales loosely based on reality. Despite their beautiful appearance, the tracks have a strangely lifeless feel, though, with the cars providing the only movement.

A big plus is the scale of multiplayer options. LAN and net-play are supported for up to 12 players in a single race or Battle Tag, wherein one player must be "it" for two minutes straight, and loses "it" by being bumped by other cars. Multiplayer is the highlight of this game, where the goofy controls tend to matter less (since everyone has to deal with these sometimes very annoying issues, as opposed to the computer-controlled cars perfectly weaving around obstacles).

The AI in the single-player game is highly aggressive, and they almost never screw up unless hit with the power-up weapons such as bottle rockets, water balloons, bowling balls, or electric bolts that you run over in typical arcade racer fashion. The game also comes with a track editor that lets you add your own simple creativity to the 50-some options already included, but the interface is horribly vague and unintuitive.

Diehard fans of RC car racing might find the game easier to play, but despite the numerous control options, *Re-Volt* is incredibly hard to handle, making it more frustrating than fun most of the time. If

you can get over the steering problems (or subject pals to their vagaries for multiplayer races), this is a slick little racer. Besides the awesome graphics, unexpected elements like numerous car variations and power-ups make this game a great-looking and entertaining mix.

— JASON D'APRILE is considered re-volting by some

GRAPHICS

Tons of eye candy — one of the best-looking driving games out there.

SOUND

The passable techno tunes are okay and the car sound effects are fine.

DEPTH

A ton of tracks and cars, but the controls are far too tricky.

DESIGN

Track design is interesting; graphics and car variety are impressive, but the courses need more life.

RATING

+ Pluses

- Loads of eye candy
- Solid track design
- Multiplayer is a cool party game

- Minuses

- Over-steering is a real problem
- Tracks are generally lifeless
- Track editor not fully developed

DEVELOPER → Studio 3
 PUBLISHER → Simon & Schuster
 REQUIRED → P66, 16MB RAM, 50MB
 hard drive, 2MB PCI graphics card,
 4X CD-ROM
 IDEAL → P266, 32MB RAM, 400MB
 hard drive, 8X CD-ROM

Mob Rule

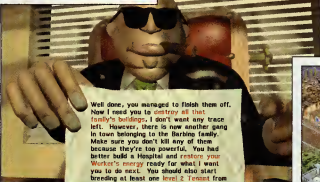
Sin City?

ACCELE-RATED

The cutscenes are great 3D renders, but the isometric view won't look any better with higher-end cards. Any card with good 3D performance and image quality (the G400 Max, for example) will likely make some of the more complicated screens scroll a little faster.



The Mob life caught up with "Gumbino," finally.



Well done, you managed to finish them off. Now I need you to destroy all that family's buildings. I don't want any trace left. However, there is now another gang in town belonging to the Barbino family. Make sure you don't kill any of them because they're too powerful. You had better build a Hospital and restore your Worker's energy ready for what I want you to do next. You should also start breeding at least one level 2 Tumbler from

A realtime strategy game that includes hookers?

Fuhgettaboutit.

Of course, Eidos has already done the wiseguys-strategy game bit with *Gangsters* (that managed a whopping PCXL rating of 6), but *Mob Rule* adds a healthy dose of wit to the mix. The result? Since the game takes itself less seriously than "heavier" city-building strategy games, it is more approachable, and keeps you laughing even while you commit atrocities like murder, extortion, and robbery. Inspired by American gangster movies set in the '30s and infused with British wit, *Mob Rule* is punctuated by bold, brassy, cartoonish 3D cutscenes, hilarious voice acting, and complex micromanagement. Unfortunately it's also plagued by a few playability issues and some bugs.

The basic concept is to build your dastardly empire by purchasing land, developing businesses, and raising new workers or tenants to run those businesses. Round out your employee roster by converting workers into ruthless gangsters or "fixers" (who repair or destroy, depending upon the situation). Control of your family's actions happens on a very low level, with each person needing to be told what to do whenever a problem arises. This is fun at the beginning, when the number of



Just a thought ... what the hell do blimps do?

tasks that need addressing is small. But the process turns arduous as you advance through the game and are forced to look at big-picture details like upgrading your businesses, making money, etc.

This is one of *Mob Rule*'s biggest downsides — the game requires so much of your attention for boring tasks like repairing dilapidated buildings and managing the intricacies of the cooked books, that you find yourself impatient to perform the fun stuff such as attacking other "families" or building brothels. Given the entertainment value of the outlandish rendered cutscenes that introduce orders and instructions, it's a real shame that the interface is so overpowered with buttons — you end up fighting the game to get to the fun bits, rather than having them brought to you.

Other problems include some minor control issues when selecting characters or objects and a tendency toward instability. When playing the game during multiple sittings, it quit-out without notice about 10% of the time. A little more time in development could

have solved both the playability issues and the bug-related crashes. With so much information to track, it's not surprising that there are inconsistencies, but as it stands, *Mob Rule* requires more work to play than the entertainment you get in return.

— JEFFREY ADAM YOUNG collects stylish cement shoes

GRAPHICS

Exceptional for an RTS game, especially the close-up window that shows detailed 3D cartoons.

SOUND

Part of the slapstick appeal comes from the sound effects, which also help with cues for gameplay events.

DEPTH

We're not talking *Total Annihilation* here, but plenty deep enough for the subject matter.

DESIGN

This is the real sticking point: The game gets too bogged down in the details to keep it fun.

RATING 5

+ Pluses

- Funny characterizations
- Great graphics
- Humorous bits

- Minuses

- Painful micromanagement
- Tedious tasks
- Unexpected crashes

The humorous and stylish cutscenes are the best part of *Mob Rule*. They're perfect for a well-deserved laugh after you've drudged through the endless micromanagement of the game.



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RATING PENDING



DEVELOPER → DreamForge
PUBLISHER →SSI/Mindscape
REQUIRED → P200, 64MB RAM,
200MB hard drive, 6X CD-ROM
IDEAL → P11 300, 128MB RAM, 4MB
PCI video card

Rites of War

SSI hits the mark with Warhammer General

ACCELE-RATED

How do we fill this interesting little box when there isn't any acceleration, and all the graphical high points are courtesy of good, solid, old-fashioned 2D?



Brrr, it's cold out here. Whoever thought up fighting in the snow?



(Left) Cities represent major strategic objectives, and are very tough to capture. (Right) Terrain is always a key consideration, as mountains and rivers impede advance.

The *Warhammer* game universe, designed originally for the tabletop by Games Workshop, has quietly produced some awesome strategy games over the years. From *Shadow of the Horned Rat* to the excellent *Chaos Gate*, SSI has been on the ball in translating *Warhammer*'s blood-n-guts backdrop to the PC.

Rites of War picks up this tradition and marries it to another brilliant tradition, the *Panzer General* turn-based strategy series. After the wonderful Tolkien-flavored *Fantasy General* experiment, *Warhammer 40K*'s gaudy sci-fi warfare gets the full PG treatment. Instead of infantry, tanks, and Messerschmitts, you'll be controlling jump marines, hovercraft, and gargoyles. It's all good.

The campaign is set on a planet contested by both the Eldar and the Tiranids. The Eldar are a race of noble, coneheaded warriors who have had it up to the pointy bits with intergalactic oppression. As might be gleaned from their name, the Tiranids just want to stomp jackbooted through the wilds of space. The two species clash in a 24-mission grand campaign that unfolds over a series of wonderfully painted battlefield maps.

The gorgeous graphics of the 2D maps suggest a wide variety of terrain, landforms, and features, all painted with a glorious palette of bright, engaging colors. The 3D-rendered units reflect the endlessly creative *Warhammer* backdrop, and include such lewdly named beasts as Howling Banishes, Hormagaunts, and Sisters of Battle (mmm ... sisters).

Combat plays out just as it does in *Panzer General II*, with the configuration of your forces, initial deployment at one edge of the battlefield, and objectives across the map. The tactical engine is deep and surprisingly intuitive, given the sci-fi setting. Artillery often up suspected enemy positions, and scouts pinpoint their locations before the armor and infantry move in to engage. The additions to the engine include Glory Points, which are earned through victories, and then spent to customize new skills and equipment for veteran units.

The *General* series has been getting tougher and tougher with each incarnation, and in *Rites of War*, the situation has become dire. After about 15 of the 24 campaign missions, you'll encounter scenarios that are inhumanly challenging, and by the last few missions you'll start to wonder just what kind of sadistic bastard designed this game. Around the endgame, I discovered this is easily the most difficult turn-based strategy game I've ever played.

Multiplayer is strongly supported with four-player, head-to-head, and cooperative modes. The additional multiplayer maps are smartly

designed to get you off and fighting, minimizing the slower advance phases that can sometimes bog down the single-player campaign.

Perhaps my biggest complaint about *Rites of War* is that it doesn't capitalize enough on the bizarre *Warhammer* backdrop. After all, this is a universe filled with satanic Space Marines, beligerent dwarf armies, Psykers, and monsters of every stripe. Too often, *Rites of War* seems like a World War II game with brightly uniformed combatants. Not that this is a bad thing; the game engine is the best in the business, and just keeps getting better.

This is a top-notch game which does both *Warhammer* and the PG engine proud. It's the best of two great worlds.

— DANIEL MORRIS believes that life is cheap, and that ammunition is expensive

GRAPHICS

Easily the best-looking turn-based strategy game ever.

SOUND

Excellent martial music, with acceptable battle sound effects.

DEPTH

The *Panzer General II* engine offers the most tactically rich system in the turn-based genre.

DESIGN

While not taking as much advantage of the setting as it might have, *Warhammer* is a clever and worthy addition to the PG tradition.

RATING

+ Pluses

→ It's pretty
→ Brilliant *Panzer General II* engine
→ Freaky *Warhammer* setting

— Minuses

→ Unbelievably difficult toward the end
→ Occasionally slow pace
→ Not enough sci-fi battle features.

DEVELOPER → Red Lemon
 PUBLISHER → Eidos
 REQUIRED → PII 233, 32MB RAM,
 600MB hard drive, BX CD-ROM,
 DirectX 2MB SVGA video card
 IDEAL → PII 300, 64MB RAM, 800MB
 hard drive, 4MB Glide/D3D-compliant
 video card

Braveheart

A Scottish Soldier (boggled down in Some-Glen-Or-Other)

ACCELE-RATED

Glide looks the best, but everything tends to crash, including the tried-and-true software mode.



Scotland, where men (in Catholic schoolgirl skirts) are men, and sheep are nervous.



Just another typical "last call" at a Scottish pub.

Encompassing the extended-mix, 13th-Century furball of the Scot clans versus the English invaders, *Braveheart* is—in theory—full of mighty struggles, grand-scale strategic plans, and soul-crushing tactical defeats. But the real challenge begins when you finally get the game to run.

Thinly coated in this new film-license makeover is *Tartan Army*, anticipated for some time by hardcore strategy fans and grudge-bearing Scots alike. *Braveheart* ambitiously combines turn-based strategic management with real-time 3D tactical clashes in a stylish and historically unique package that sets out to march proudly in all the right directions ... but gimps grimly on its way to mediocrity, seriously wounded by a lack of supplies, training, and support.

Commanding one of 16 clans in the nationwide conflict memorialized in the famous Mel "Hair-plugs" Gibson movie, you'll engage in nearly every aspect of Scotland's legendary struggle. At the strategic level, you'll scout out territories around your home, arrange trade routes and caravans, allocate workforces (to farming, weapon production, etc), and spy on/negotiate with neighboring clans. Primary concerns are the

vacant crown of Scotland itself, the unification of squabbling factions, and the looming threat of the English juggernaut. Each element of the diplomacy, resource juggling, and army training can be painfully micromanaged or more conveniently assigned to a handy triangular device that sets your resource plans for you.

Administrative duties are only half the challenge, however. Each instance of military conflict is resolved on the realtime 3D battlefield, hands-on, man-to-man and ... um, kilt to kilt. Just one look at a typical management screen can be frightening, with little iconic buttons everywhere for new weapons development, diplomatic missions, supply stores, and more.

Unfortunately, the well-intentioned tutorial (which, as promised, addresses resource management, strategic moves, and tactical combat) is nowhere near enough to turn the first-timer loose on *Braveheart*'s staggering learning curve. Part of the fault here lies in the interface itself, with resource/admin screens broken down town by town, rather than consolidated. The realtime 3D tactical portions favor pile-ons rather than *Mythic*-style formations and tactics. Chaotic battles are historically appropriate, but the enemy AI doesn't seem to take advantage of sloppy attacks by surrounding clumped forces.

And, there's the abundance of bugs and oversights. Why didn't my ordered garrison ever show up? Why can't I send forces to a location by clicking on the battlefield map? Why can't I "recall" but not "redirect" en-route armies? Of course, the game may not run at all. Off the shelf, it failed to run on four different computer systems (in the supported Glide, D3D, and software modes), and even on the system on which it did work, it occasionally bombed during night missions. Meanwhile, support has been virtually non-existent.

When it's working, this game is playable, stylish, and could conceivably be improved with a massive



Don't bore me with details!

patch. If you ascend the learning curve (and if the program holds together), *Braveheart* offers a thorough, grand-scale-to-close-combat campaign experience. But these are huge "ifs" and there's no guarantee of developer support to make the game meet its potential.

—CHRIS HUDAK has a large "Damn-This-Title-Coulda-Racked" collection of games

GRAPHICS

Excellent night and day battles. Busy but detailed strategic allocation screens; full 3D battlefields with polygonal fighters.

SOUND

Perfectly-suited period tunes and an excellent tutorial voiceover. Tactical sounds are limited and boring, though, with one standard order-recognition voice for everybody.

DEPTH

Profoundly deep strategic gameplay — once you're past the debilitating learning curve, and if it doesn't crash.

DESIGN

Gutsy strategy/tactics fusion, but marred by inexplicable "undocumented features."

RATING 4

+ Pluses

- Ambitious design
- Aggressive strategic AI
- Authentic historical flavor

— Minuses

- Bugs and bombs 'til the wee sheep come home
- Blithering tactical AI
- Overcomplicated interface

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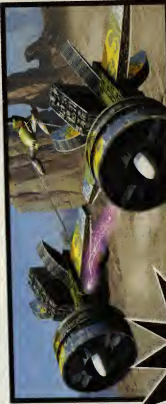
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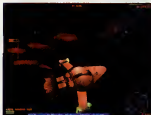
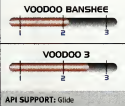
DEVELOPER	→ Particle Systems
PUBLISHER	→ Infogrames
REQUIRED	→ P166, 32MB RAM, 4x CD-ROM, 150MB hard drive
IDEAL	→ P11 300, 64MB RAM, 3Dfx accelerator card, flight stick

Independence War Deluxe Edition

More I-War Lore

ACCELE-RATED

I-War Deluxe Edition looks and plays much better accelerated, but unfortunately, only 3Dfx cards are supported. This includes Voodoo1, Voodoo2, Voodoo3, or the Voodoo Banshee. Notes: Voodoo Rush cards will not work with this game, either.



In what was a banner year for the space combat sim, lukewarm sales of *Independence War* in the U.S. can be attributed to heavy competition. Fortunately, Infogrames has shown faith in the franchise, as they're back again with the *Deluxe Edition*, a value-priced bundle featuring the original game, plus a few gameplay tweaks, as well as a new campaign dubbed "Defiance."

These 18 extra missions take place in the year 2268 as in *I-War*, but now you play as Edison Hayes, a young indie captain who fights with his new crew against the Commonwealth Navy in a hijacked 160-meter Dreadnought-class Corvette. Halfway through the campaign, Hayes learns more about the forces behind this intergalactic war from his mentor and realizes the Commonwealth may not be the only adversary. The Defiance campaign will surely please fans of *I-War* for its well-thought out and varied (albeit linear) missions and entertaining cutscenes.

Based on feedback collected from vocal *I-War* gamers, Particle Systems has added a loadout screen to choose the best weapon setup, added two new weapons, and the ability to give commands to wingmen. They've also seen fit to give us more ships and stations. Regrettably, two beefs with the original game remain. First, there is still no multiplayer mode. Sure, 60+ solo missions is quite a lot to chew — and many of them



Another useless Canadian invention shows that the Canucks are not much brighter in the future than they are now.

can be quite challenging, especially towards the end — but it would've been a blast to log on and play against real human opponents. Secondly, while the graphics are quite impressive in hardware mode (now with an 800x600 resolution option with a Voodoo2 card or newer), there is still no 3D support for other chipsets. A D3D patch is desperately needed.

Finally, while save points have been added, they are *automatic* save points. I must have restarted one tough scenario to times since the save point was so ill-placed.

Despite these minor failings, *I-War Deluxe* is a must-have for space sim lovers. For little more than expansion pack price (\$29.99 or less, plus a \$10 rebate for owners of

the original game), you can have a fully-patched, complete game with an extra, detailed campaign in which to get thoroughly embroiled.

— MARC SALTZMAN is *only a fully patched, complete Canadian priced at only \$19.99*

GRAPHICS

Simply superb in hardware mode.

SOUND

Fairly good, with directional sound effects and convincing voice-overs.

DEPTH

Lots of varied (single-player) missions.

DESIGN

An immersive story with a robust training program for newbies.

RATING

+ Pluses

- Lots of challenging gameplay
- Cool graphics, great story
- Good replayability

Minuses

- No multiplayer mode
- Only 3Dfx cards supported. Gee, how '97
- Auto-save points are fine, but you can't save them where you'd like

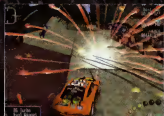
Though you can't see them, the pilots are all Canadian and have really bad mullet haircuts.

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Looking to New Fox Sports Inventions

As the new football season dawns and the NHL schedule inches closer, our thoughts turn to the "Thomas Edisons" of sports — the people who make four-hour football games and sleep-inducing hockey contests what they are today. They are The Fabulous Folks of Fox. What other network could make hockey look like a comic book video game, and turn Terry Bradshaw's ghastly mug into an American icon? Who else could make us quiver with laughter over the crazy antics of shoe salesmen, stick-thin women lawyers, and 43-year-old college students living in a certain area code? You know the answer, and you know they're not done reinventing the wheel, because we can never have enough annoying crap floating across the screen during our games.

INVENTION → Martin Lawrence's face electronically added to every hockey puck

EFFECT → Slapshot speeds jump dramatically. On-ice goalie deaths rise 24 percent

PCXL SAYS → "Oooh, Fox so crazy!"



Martin Lawrence's face on every hockey puck



INVENTION → All NFL half-time shows now incorporate live "World's Greatest Police Chases"

EFFECT → Stadium crime hits record high. Up with People revenue hits record low

PCXL SAYS → "The only combination more perfect than football and car chases would be Denise Richards, a cold beer, and a two-hour very special episode of 'Full House'"

INVENTION → Christina Applegate now to work as side judge of every NFL game

EFFECT → Frenzied, repeated viewings of replays, just to check out the referee's rack

PCXL SAYS → "We can put a man on the moon, but we can't clone the hot star of 'Married With Children'? C'mon science, enough with the disease research!"



Christina Applegate as side judge

INVENTION → Studio host James Brown replaced by loveable animated Garfield

EFFECT → No time left for game highlights after hilarious references to lasagna and feline obesity

PCXL SAYS → "We're going on a hunger strike until someone puts Garfield to sleep"



"It's funny 'till he's fat"



Van Dyke

PCXL SAYS → "When will NHL 2000 have a separate tooth-rendering engine?"

INVENTION → TeethTrax

EFFECT → Where Puck-Track added a video-game-style red streak to slapshots, TeethTrax will highlight knocked out player teeth with a glowing visage of Jerry



TeethTrax host Van Dyke



Madden remains King — on television as well as the PC football field.

THE STANDINGS

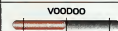
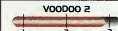
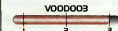
Two new football games and one new hoops game enter our standings, and neither Microsoft game fared too well. Madden snags up the field with *Fever 2000*, while *Inside Drive 2000* can't win over *Live '99* or *Live '98*. Guess it's back to the drawing board in Redmond, boys.

GAME TITLE		W	L
BASKETBALL	NBA Live 99	4	0
	NBA Live 98	3	1
	NBA Inside Drive 2000	1	3
	NBA Action	0	4
FOOTBALL	Madden 2000	1	0
	NFL Fever 2000	0	1
GOLF	Links LS 99	7	0
	Jack Nicklaus 6	6	1
	PGA Championship 99	5	2
	Tiger Woods 99	4	3
	Golden Tee Golf	3	4
HOCKEY	Pro 18 World Tour	2	5
	Links Extreme	0	7
HOCKEY	NHL Hockey 99	2	0
	NHL Hockey 98	1	1
	Powerplay 98	0	2
BASEBALL	High Heat 2K	4	0
	Triple Play 2K	3	1
	Microsoft Baseball 2K	2	2
	Hardball 6: 2K Edition	1	3
	Baseball 2K Edition (VR)	0	4
HOCKEY	FIFA 99	2	0
	Fox Sports Soccer 98	1	1
	Sensible Soccer 98	0	2

DEVELOPER → EA Sports
 PUBLISHER → EA Sports
 REQUIRED → P166, 16MB RAM,
 30MB hard drive, 4X CD-ROM
 IDEAL → P11450, 64MB RAM, 3D
 card, gamepad, quick mouse finger for
 turning off game commentary and
 escaping menu music

ACCELE-RATED

Madden 2000 offers support for Glide and Direct3D. Glide seems to offer the fastest framerates. Running on a Voodoo3 and Voodoo2, image quality is stunning, while under Direct3D the TNT2 was slightly less impressive. A first-generation Voodoo2, of course, offered rather crappy framerates, so stick with the high-powered cards if you can.



API SUPPORT: Direct3D, Glide



Madden NFL 2000

Madden's back with more of the same — and then some

Think Buffalo Bills, early '90s. This was one of the NFL's best, a powerhouse team with all the right elements, a squad with the grist and framework to make the Super Bowl for four straight years. And yet, they still always fell short of the glorious mountaintop.

Now think *John Madden* football for the PC, and tell us Marv Levy isn't secretly working for EA Sports. Consistently among the top grid-iron games, *Madden* has sports gaming nuts waiting each year for the latest version, hoping this will be the one that will take it all. But like the Bills, *Madden* always poops out just shy of greatness.

Which brings us to *Madden 2000*, the 10th anniversary of the monster EA Sports franchise. New for 2000: A Madden Challenge mode gives an extra incentive to achieve feats like 300 yards of passing in a game or a 100-yard rusher in order to unlock codes no self-respecting gamer would ever use. Also, there's a situation simulator that throws you into great moments from history's finest games. Can you lead the Dolphins over the Chargers in that 1981 overtime game?

The look and feel is superior to last year's version, with crisper



Varied player sizes mean more realistic match-ups and collisions.

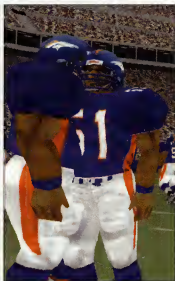
graphics, more detailed and differentiated player models, and what feels and flows like a faster game. New animations, from players shaking off tackles and a tackler knocking off a running back's helmet, to the head turns of a cat-quick wide receiver, all show off the ability of the engine to put us in the game while still moving everything fast enough to keep us

interested. Though it only has one competitor (Microsoft's deft-playing but shallow *NFL Fever 2000*), *Madden 2000* is definitely the best-looking PC football game this year, despite some clipping issues among players.

Madden 2000 plays and controls well, too, especially when two human opponents match up, though the game doesn't quite shed the insidious problems of its predecessors. Running the ball still seems more of a reality-lover's chore than a productive play call. And there are certain graphic mistakes, especially on screens and quick cuts near the



Though Atlanta lines up here for a half-back handoff, running is a tedious exercise; passing is about the only effective offensive tactic.



Post-play celebrations and TV-style close-ups sprinkled throughout the game keep *Madden's* traditional broadcast feel and mood.

sideline. Player animation finishes — no matter what — often sending you out of bounds, rather than allowing you to run up field for say, actually gaining yards.

In-game sounds are robust as is usual for the series, but the commentary seems to go continually nowhere, with severely repeated phrases, sparse humor, and even sparser pertinent comments — plus all the usual Madden bologna you've heard him say hundreds of times.

Depth is where *Madden* really shines, with comprehensive statistics tracking and full season, play-off, and franchise modes that let you test your GM skills as you wheel and deal players and salary-cap dollars on the way to the Super Bowl.

The game supports multiplayer through LAN, Internet, and serial modem-to-modem play, though occasional crashes plagued our attempts at playing over a network, and Internet play often proved too laggy to be playable. Other gripes include the menu background music which is some of the worst to "grace" the series. Picking your controller proved especially counterintuitive, as did choosing a team, which for some reason is done by clicking on arrows smaller than a Windows cursor.

Nitpicking? Maybe so, but you can't help but believe that had the menus been given a little more thought, the animations trouble worked out, and the running game tweaked just a little, this could have been a classic. Instead, the game ends up more like that persistent kid we love for trying, John Elway before Super Bowl XXXII, the guy we wished would win it all just once. Coming close is good enough for now, but we'd love to see *Madden* take it all before the series runs out of steam.



Madden 2000's depth allows virtual GMs a shot at making the Bucs winners — even with Trent Dilfer.

GRAPHICS

Stunning player models and 3D stadiums make this the most realistic piskin on PC.

SOUND

Excellent grunts, groans, and player exclamations, despite the annoying commentary.

CONTROL

Smooth feeling and easy to learn, player controls are solid and generally pretty well done.

REALISM

Terrific realism in the Pro and All-Pro modes, with an Arcade option for console-style players.

RATING 8

+ Pluses

- Best football graphics on PC
- Depth galore
- Tight controls

- Minuses

- Skating animations send players out of bounds
- Repetitive commentary
- Sub-par interface with awful music

DEVELOPER → High Voltage Software
PUBLISHER → Microsoft
REQUIRED → P166, 32MB RAM,
 90MB hard drive, 4X CD-ROM
IDEAL → P11400, 64MB RAM, 3D
 card, gamepad

ACCELE-RATED

NBA Inside Drive supports Voodoo cards, but only through DirectX. We had no trouble running the game with either the Voodoo cards or the TNT2, though the game doesn't support any of the TNT2's special features, so image quality was very similar between the cards.

FAMOUS INSIDERS



DEEP THROAT

INSIDE OF → The Watergate scandal. **MYSTERIOUS BECAUSE** → He'd only meet Washington Post reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein in an abandoned parking garage. **OUT-ED BY** → Nobody yet. Woodward says he'll reveal the name after *Deep Throat* dies.

RON JEREMY

INSIDE OF → 5-reel thousand porn stars → way inside. **MYSTERIOUS BECAUSE** → He slithered with hot women, even though he's a fat, ugly dude with a gipsyic... oh, wait... maybe that's not mysterious. **OUT-ED BY** → Christy Canyon, Jenna Jameson, Kimberly Cupps, Conner Savage, and many others.

BABY JESSICA

INSIDE OF → A drink, dark wine in a Texas backyard. **MYSTERIOUS BECAUSE** → Despite the fact that the country was captivated by her, the now 35-year-old Jessica has been trapped in an airport storage locker in Milwaukee for months — and nobody cares. **OUT-ED BY** → Brave film men and several whiny, weasel-like network TV correspondents, who made their fame and fortune from the rescue and either looked back.

HAMBONE: THE FAT GUY STUCK INSIDE HIS HOUSE

INSIDE OF → A house filled with empty pizza boxes. **MYSTERIOUS BECAUSE** → He never left his house or had any visible signs of income, but somehow still ordered eight pizzas a day. **OUT-ED BY** → Richard Simmons, who will open his own out-of-control gym.

NBA Inside Drive 2000

Does Microsoft deserve your hard-earned \$20?

NBA *Inside Drive* 2000 is a curious creature, indeed. Stamped with a \$19.95 price tag and released at the beginning of football season, the Microsoft NBA hoops game probably has hardcore gamers scratching their heads rather than dipping into their wallets. But oddly isn't necessarily a bad thing, especially for \$20. At that price, gamers are willing to forgive a lot — as long as they know that *Inside Drive* doesn't come close to the depth of EA Sports' *NBA Live* 2000. And that may have been Microsoft's plan all along.

Engineered with the goal of maximizing gameplay and graphics, *Inside Drive* succeeds on some levels. Its rendering engine is able to spit out impressive stuff like shadows and wavering reflections, varying body types, and players that could actually pass for their flesh counterparts. The graphics rival *NBA Live* '99 to be sure, but having seen early versions of *Live* 2000, they still lag behind the facial and body realism EA is creating for this year's edition. Framelines are the graphic engine's other big accomplishment, as even on slower systems, the game moves at a nice clip. It's fast, furious, and very arcade-like in its feel and play.

But *Inside Drive*'s speed is part of its biggest downfall, too. As with



NBA Inside Drive 2000's strength is in its gameplay, which features solid graphics and a consistently high frame rate.

most basketball games in one-player mode, defensive AI is mostly inept. Playing a full-length, 12-minute-per-quarter game often resulted in scores of 150, even 200 points. The AI just isn't smart enough to stop players from driving the fastest man, over and over, into the lane for lay-ups.

The game's innovative control scheme does provide a smidgen of depth, allowing you to call for picks on offense, pivot on one foot, set picks, and crouch while dribbling. Defensively, one button will let you crouch for better position or stand up straight to take a charge. It's a nice touch we haven't seen before. But the real depth and the sense of accomplishment when you finally win the NBA title just isn't here, especially when you can win sweep the title with relatively no effort, clobbering everyone on your entire schedule by a score of 205-151.

And there's not much more than in-game action on which to fall back. Season play only offers an 82-game schedule (no 26- or 52-game seasons, as *Live* offers), and there's no franchise mode. Multiplayer is stuck in console land with no LAN or Internet play, but it's fun with two players at the same machine. Trades and free agent pick-ups are nothing more than player-for-player swaps, with no AI to mix ludicrous trades.

So the question remains: Is a beautifully rendered, fun-to-play

basketball game that will be mostly obsolete in three months worth \$20? As hoops fans, we recommend *Inside Drive*, if only for the sake of comparison to *Live*. As straight-up gamers, it's probably not worth giving another hard-earned \$20 to Bill and the Microsoft cash machine.

GRAPHICS

Some of the best basketball graphics we've seen to date, with gorgeous reflections and realistic players.

SOUND

Excellent in-game commentary that doesn't get old after a few hours, and solid in-game sounds.

CONTROL

Innovative one-button controls like "dribble crouch" and "stand" for charging fouls give the game depth.

REALISM

Good, if NBA teams regularly scored 200 points per game.

RATING

+ Pluses

- Stunning graphics and fast framerate
- Fun to play for a while
- Excellent play-by-play commentary

- Minuses

- Defensive AI lacking
- No statistical or franchise mode depth
- No LAN or Internet multiplayer

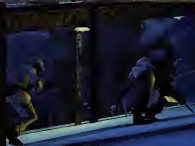


Though models are nice, we've seen better in EA's *Live*.

Tom Clancy's
RAINBOW SIX
ROGUE SPEAR

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MISSED ME?



Team Rainbow is back in full force. *Rogue Spear*, the sequel to PC Gamer's 1998 Action Game of the Year, immerses you even deeper in the explosive action of an elite multinational strike force.

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I SCORE...



MORE OFTEN

HANDS-ON WITH DIABLO II

The winners of our fabulous *Diablo II* Gaming Weekend flew to San Francisco for three days of hardcore gaming. PCXL was there to spend some quality time with one of the hottest games in development.

The first indication that *Diablo II* was playing as well as I was hoping came as soon as I got to the hotel where Blizzard was hosting the beta test on a Saturday afternoon. I was expecting the room to be empty, since it was a nice day in the city and nearly all the contest winners were from out of town — I figured they'd all be out sightseeing. Instead, all eight terminals were occupied. After muscling my way onto a machine — there was some serious journalistic investigation needed here, after all — I deleted my first character after accidentally entering a password, and then deleted Blizzard creative director Bill Roper's character, much to his chagrin. Finally, I got up and running with a level one Necromancer.

Four hours and three characters later, it's my opinion that this game is shaping up just about as well as you could hope for. The pace is faster than ever, and it exudes that great, smooth feel that's become the hallmark of Bliz-

zard games — it's just so darn playable. Although this pre-beta build often crashed (like every 10 minutes), neither I, nor the contest winners gave a rat's ass. After each crash, which was followed by a mass meerkat impression (as heads popped up over terminals, looking around to see who else's screen had frozen), it was a simple case of making a beeline rush to your previous location, in the hopes of progressing a little bit further before the next freeze.

Two recurring thoughts ran through my head as I tried to experience as much as possible in the few precious hours at this great event. The first: The developers were supposedly influenced by a helluva lot of *Everquest* playing, and it shows in the design of everything, from the classes to their skills and the huge assortment of equipment. The second thought: How could I manage to make off with, I mean "borrow" a copy of this alpha to "work" on with on my home machine? Heh heh, just kidding guys. Yeah, kidding ... that's the ticket.



You can tell the game is fun when it crashes every five minutes and you just don't care.

THE SHELL

Diablo II is client/server based through battle.net. Blizzard having learned its painful lessons after *Diablo* became a hack/cheat-fest. The interface has been tweaked but follows the style of *Diablo* and *StarCraft* with a server list, connection speeds, and available channels. The players in any given channel will be shown at the bottom of the screen in miniature form with their equipment.

The servers, or shards as they're called, will either be open or named. Open shards will be user-created, and you can use any of your characters from single-player or multiplayer on any open server. The open shards will also have an eight-player limit, and may or may not have a level restriction (up to +/- five levels) depending on the preference of the operator. Likewise, named shards will all be Blizzard-based — this is where they hope to deter the cheating that plagued the original by providing a level playing field. Characters created on these shards will only be able to be played on these shards, à la *Everquest*. In typical Blizzard fashion, it's simple and straightforward.

CHARACTER CREATION

You can choose from five classes: Paladin, Amazon, Barbarian, Sorceress, and Necromancer. All five classes were playable, though not fully polished, and the developers were promising more class balance between melee and spell combat, as opposed to *Diablo*, where everyone picked the Sorcerer because of the powerful spells and Mana Shield. The Barbarian illustrates this adjustment all by his lonesome. As the master of close combat, you can wield two weapons at once — making you a walking blender. This should be enough, but these guys also



Here I am with my trusty Staff of Mild Discomfort.



As the Blizzard guys will tell you, the best design decisions always involve beer.



These bastards obviously cheated to get this far in one weekend. Just kidding, these pics weren't actually from the Gaming Weekend.

have a ton of special combat abilities to supplement their pure creature-mashing power. "Bash" is an extra attack that you can throw right after your regular attacks, although it does require mana. "Weapon mastery" skills increase your hit probability and damage with the different weapon types. The Necromancer starts out with a Skeleton pet spell, which you cast on monster corpses, creating a skeleton who fights for you. The pet will seek out the nearest bad guy and attack it, you have no direct control over it.

COMBAT

Left-clicking on an enemy attacks it, but now you can assign different actions to both the left and right mouse button. You could have an offensive spell as the left button and a defensive one on the right, for example. Also, after working through different basic attack options, Blizzard now seems set with one click per attack. However, there is the option to hold down the mouse button to keep attacking, thus removing the incessant mouse-mashing issue from the original, but essentially leaving this play style in, should you want the feel-

ing of firing every arrow or controlling every swing. Running is a new movement type, and holding down the left button while you run will let you change directions simply by moving the mouse. Running will also help you maneuver around the battlefield by hitting, retreating, or chasing monsters who are running away. The combat is still as simple and fun as ever, but more frantic now, with increased options, more dangerous odds, and higher speed.

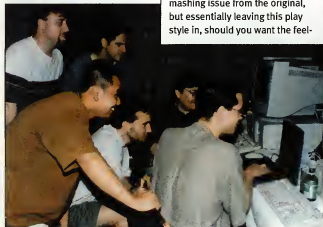


Without your mini-map, you can easily get lost in the massive outdoor areas of this game.



QUESTS

You receive your first quest from one of the merchants in the village. She tells you to find a cave in the first outdoor area and clear it of monsters. The spellcasting characters had some difficulty with this quest at level 1, whereas the fighting classes could handle it from the get-go. Once you clear this quest, you immediately get the next assignment from another NPC — go to a nearby monastery and take out a corrupt Rogue. The reward for the first quest was a skill point. What's nice about these tasks is that once you complete a given quest, it becomes tagged on your character so that you never have to complete the quest again, even if you join another server.



Here is evidence that our readers do more interesting things than surf for porn. They also play *Diablo II*.

ENVIRONMENT

You start out in a small Rogue village, buying things from a few merchants and talking to various wandering NPCs. The exit to the village will be in one of four random directions, and the first wilderness area, the Blood Moor, borders it. When you enter the new area (with no loading time) the name will appear on the screen to let you know your location. In the Moor you have your first quest and the easiest monsters. One of the first things I noticed was that the outdoor areas are much, much larger than anything in the first game. Since they're randomly generated like dungeons, you can't take anything for granted, except that certain areas will always border others. For example, the Cold Plains are the second outdoor area which borders on the Moor, and you can find it by following a path that always connects the two zones.

EQUIPMENT

Starting equipment is pretty sparse — you're thrust at the precipice of greatness with only a weapon and a piece of armor. The inventory system is very similar to *Diablo I*, but with more slots added, such as hands, feet, and waist, to accommodate items from the much increased equipment

list. Excess stuff can be stored in your stash, which is a chest in the center of the village (no more dumping on the ground and being constantly amazed that none of the rag-tag NPCs does a runner with it). Money was pretty tight at the beginning of the game and seems a bit harder to come by than in *Diablo*, judging only from the paltry amounts dropped by creatures. Magic items will be randomly generated as before, with many more types, styles, and powers. You'll find items from monsters such as teeth, hearts, quills, etc., which can be converted into valuable potions or arrows with the Convert skill. All characters with a small amount of mana have this skill, and with it you can keep yourself stocked up with necessary ammo and potions.

ADVANCEMENT

More than anything, this is what makes the game so addictive. Your character gains more skills and spells as you advance. There's also a lot more stylish, tougher, and better equipment, too. As in *Diablo*, when you gain your new level, you immediately get a boost in hit points and mana, as well as five attribute points to put in one of four categories: Strength (damage inflicted), Agility (how hard you are to hit), Vitality (your stamina), and Energy (magic abil-



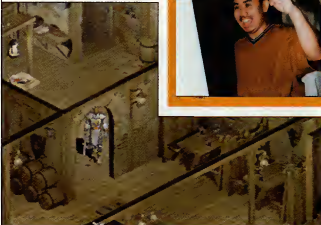
There seem to be some improvements in the fantasy hoochie area.

ity). Then, you get a skill point to apply towards your character's skill tree, which is a branching network of related skills, requiring skills on the previous level to unlock the more powerful ones. This is where you can really make your character unique. You can choose to specialize in certain areas, or to dabble a bit in many special skills. If you wanted to make your Barbarian character an axe master, you would put multiple points into the Axe Mastery skill, foregoing Sword and Mace mastery. A Necromancer could decide he wanted to command a skeleton army by putting multiple points into the summoning spell as well as the spell that deter-

mines the pets' power. It's flexible and just a plain good idea. And fortunately for all of us drooling with anticipation for the official beta release, there seem to be a lot of those plain good ideas in this game.

EVERYONE WINS

Three people over at Blizzard are mighty nice folks. After agreeing to a contest that would bring six extraordinarily lucky souls to San Francisco for a weekend of *Diablo II*ing, they went still further and let each winner bring a pet. From as far away as Georgia and as near as San Mateo, just down the road from SF, nearly all the winners of the contest forewent the luxury pleasures of the City by the Bay to keep on playing *Diablo II*.



Indoor environments raise a whole bunch of new gameplay issues, such as "Where'd I leave my damn keys?"



When it comes to *Diablo II*'s spiny hedgehog things, shoot first, ask questions later.

INTELLIGENT GANG WARFARE

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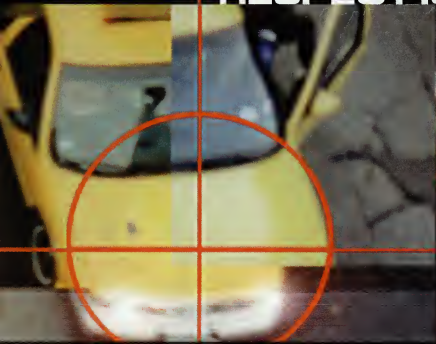
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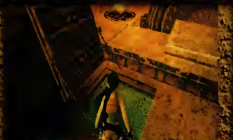
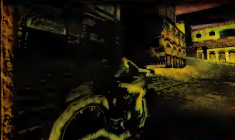
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A large, detailed illustration of Lara Croft, the protagonist of the Tomb Raider series. She is shown from the waist up, in profile, looking towards the right. She has dark hair tied back and is wearing a green tank top and a brown backpack. Her right arm is extended, holding a golden sarcophagus. In the background, a skeleton is visible, also holding a similar sarcophagus. The setting is an ancient Egyptian tomb with hieroglyphs on the walls.

CORE

In ancient Egypt, it was
common practice to have your
internal organs removed
and your brain pulled out
through your nose.

Of course ancient Egyptians were
lucky enough to be dead first.





EIDOS
INTERACTIVE

Could the next tomb Lara Croft enters be her own? Find out in Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation, her latest adventure. With seamlessly integrated gameplay and FMV sequences, new skin and 3-D texture mapping, diabolical new puzzles and a totally new inventory control system this is a totally new Tomb Raider. Let's just hope it's not Lara's last.

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TIBERIAN SUN

SNATCH THEIR ASS IN A BEAR TRAP!

Yep, here it is, the definitive strategy guide to everyone's favorite RTS game, *Tiberian Sun*. Well actually, it's not our favorite RTS by a long shot, but it still has some interesting tactical possibilities and no doubt thousands of you are playing it. Here we'll take a look at general multi-player tactics for the two sides, as well as some combination options and advanced tactics.

GDI

OVERVIEW →

What you have going for you is the toughness of your individual units like the Titan and Orca Bomber. GDI units are generally tougher and hit harder than their "equivalent" NOD unit on an individual level. Your main weakness is the lack of mobility for many of your units. Also, you really don't want to get into a war of attrition if you can help it. Even with the Ion Cannon, NOD's base stealth technology combined with their missile arsenals will mean that they will be able to pound your buildings and units without fear of retaliation. Actually, you don't want to get into a quick battle either, because NOD outpaces GDI in some respect in every phase of the game. What are you doing picking GDI anyway?

PHASE 1

The dreaded "disc thrower rush" can prove effective if it's a small map and you know where your enemy is located. It's likely that the NOD player will make cyborgs over regular infantry, and disc throwers en masse will mow them down quite efficiently. Set up vul-



Sorry, we thought this was a Cyborg party. It must be next door.

cans around your construction yard and refineries to guard against the dreaded "engineer rush." It's a sure thing.

PHASE 2

Start to make lots of titans if you're playing defense, or hover tanks if you're playing offense. Climb the tech tree towards orca bombers as well (more details on why you need these later). And if you're so inclined, now's the time to hit 'em with an engineer rush (see sidebar). You'll also want to invest in aerial forces as a deterrent to the powerful NOD artillery, and you can bet that any NOD player will have plenty of these on the map by now.

PHASE 3

You should have a capable air force of orca bombers, some titans for base defense, and high-level

structures like the Ion Cannon. Beware the multi-missile that can kill lots of air units, just fly your air force away from the bomber if you hear the warning. For offense you can try a disruptor attack or a Mammoth drop with a Carryall into a weak spot in their base.

UNITS

DISC THROWER → Great against vehicles and structures. Their drawbacks: They are easily killed and can't hit air targets, leaving the GDI without anti-air infantry.



The Firestorm generator undoubtedly looks super cool, but it ain't foolproof by any means.



One disruptor can put the hurt on a poorly-defended expansion.



It's all about the Mammoth drops, kid.

JUMP JET INFANTRY → They are okay at pestering enemy troops, but go for the ones who can't shoot air since any return fire will kill them pretty quickly. To be really useful, you need a whole lot of 'em — and for their high price (\$500) their power doesn't justify that level of investment. They're best suited as crate retrievers and reconnaissance units. They also take out unsupported artillery, though it does take a while.

HOVER TANKS → Versatile in that they're fast, they're unaffected by rough terrain including water, and can hit air and ground. But they are generally pretty weak, in both attack firepower as well as in the amount of damage they can with-

stand. But using them to cross normally impassable terrain can give you an advantage.

TITAN → The workhorse of the GDI army, they're relatively cheap for their power. They're tough and pack a punch with good range. However, they are absolutely blown to pieces by artillery because they're so slow.

DISRUPTOR TANKS → This crawler is slow, but powerful. Their slow-moving energy beam drains enemies' health bars really fast — and this effect is cumulative, so the more the merrier. Don't try to rush a fortified NOD base with these, however. They'll get mowed down in an instant.

ORCA BOMBERS → This is the most effective siege unit in GDI's arsenal, because of its artillery busting capabilities. A fully stocked bomber can take out an artillery unit in one pass and the splash damage will clean up any rocket infantry escorting it. Weakness include slowness and their giant aircraft carrier-esque turns, which can leave them open to multiple SAM salvos.

CARRYALL → Think of this unit as the Mammoth's personal chauffeur. It's perfect for shuttling the nearly-immobile Mammoth to enemy bases, preferably right in the middle of 'em. It can survive a couple of hits from a SAM, so it's pretty tough to beat.

GHOST STALKER → Think of it as a Tanya or Commando. He's not as tough as the NOD Cyber Commando, but he gets the job done. A medic or two as backup could prove decisive in a tight firefight. This is also best used while you have a diversion going on, such as an attack on their base.

MAMMOTH → The most bad-ass unit in the game, this monster can take out the Cyber Commando one on one. Outside of the Commando, there's nothing it can't take out in three hits or less. This is well-suited for defense but will turn the tide of a battle in a base siege. You can only have one of these at a time, so as soon as it dies, start the new one.

DIRTY TRICKS

There are quite a few "cheap" tactics that can be a decisive knock out punch to an enemy in this game. They do require some skill and timing to pull off, so they aren't a sure thing.



ARTILLERY TURTLE → Advance an army of artillery one by one towards an enemy base, plant them all down,

then take the furthest back and move it in front of the front artillery. Repeat until death comes. This is best if supported by rocket infantry and Cyborgs.

ENGINEER RUSH → This one's a tried and true method that originated in the first game. Load up your APC (or subterranean APC if you're NOD) with five engineers, and drive it into their base. Unload and take over key structures, making the construction yard and refineries your priorities. Sell 'em right off the bat, both to get free guys and so that they can't sell 'em again.

EMP BASE ATTACK → If someone has a cloaked base with lots of artillery and you can't get in, set up another base nearby and build an EMP cannon. Shoot it at the general vicinity of their base. This will knock out their stealth, giving you time to bring in an engineer attack or super unit drop. The artillery is out of commission too.

TRIPLE ENGINEER RUSH → Three times better than the engineer rush and brutally effective. Send in three subterranean APCs loaded with engineers to different spots in the base. Take over as much as possible and start building units from their production facilities. Start building a strong defense structure like the Obelisk of Light before going in. Then, when you take over a building, plant it down in the middle of their base and watch gleefully as their units fry.

STEALTH REVERSAL → Start out a major attack — just before you get near the enemies defenses, send in an engineer to capture the NOD stealth generator. Now, instead of their base being cloaked, all of your attacking units are cloaked. This is totally vicious, if you can get it to work. The effectiveness might be a bit limited since they can fire back, but still a great tactic.

BASE MANIAC → After you have a good solid base, build mobile construction vehicles and stealth generators. Now start setting up cloaked bases all over the map. A couple of artillery, a refinery, an EMP, and some SAM sites for each base should be sufficient. Once you own all of the tiberium fields it's "game over."

ANTI-AIR RUSH → If an opponent is relentlessly crushing your precious artillery with bomber or banshee runs, then this is an especially evil maneuver. Send in an engineer to take over an inconsequential (and lightly-guarded) base structure. Have a SAM site ready when you take it over. Now keep dropping down SAM sites and lasers. The SAM sites will murder the all units whenever they take off. Or, land quickly and the lasers will protect the SAMs from weak attacks. Now fire a multi-missile at their airfield. If properly executed, it's quite effective.



Learning to recognize natural chokepoints and taking advantage of them will pay off in the long run, such as placing defensive structures by this refinery.



Setting waypoints can help your base defenses, especially against sneak attacks with APCs or other types of underhanded tactics, like air raids.

NOD PHASE 1

OVERVIEW →

One on one, their units aren't as tough as GDI, but they are overall much more versatile and well rounded. They have stealth and cloak technology, a capable air unit in the Banshee, great base crackers in subterranean units and the Cyber Commando, and of course, the artillery. The mobility of units like the burrowers and the stealth stuff is a major asset and should be taken advantage of. Also, they are favorites in wars of attrition because they are perfect for turtling in.

Acquiring 5-10 cyborgs is always a prudent defense if you're expecting any early attacks. Lasers around your yard are a needed precaution against engineer rushes. Climbing the tech tree seems to be a bit more important to NOD, so build the structures as quickly as possible, even if it means neglecting early defense.

PHASE 2

Just a few artillery can hold your base nicely as you continue to climb towards stealth technology

and the temple. Try to hold tiberium fields with artillery and SAM sites. If you see opportunistic attacks, you can bring a combined force of tick tanks and artillery for a base siege.

PHASE 3

The Cyber Commando is your friend. Use high-level tech to control the map and chip away at the other players. Missiles and stealth technology are a great combination. Don't neglect air forces since Banshees can be a devastating asset. If the map allows, keeping a steady income of tiberium waste allows you to kick ass.

UNITS

CYBORG → This is a slow, tough-as-nails infantry unit that's more like a tank with legs. It has a good anti-personnel attack but is weak against vehicles. They also heal up quickly if standing in a tiberium field and continue fighting, even when ripped in half.

TICK TANK → A nice, straightforward tank. Similar to the medium tank in *Red Alert*. They can also burrow their lower halves in the ground to become tougher. A rush of these, in the right situations, is often quite effective.



If a base is stealthed up, you can't see it unless you're really, really close. It gives NOD a massive advantage, though hitting their power is an effective assault method.



Blow up those bridges if they come at you with a tank rush. It renders your enemy helpless. NOD artillery will destroy an expensive rush in a situation such as this.

ARTILLERY → If war is about controlling territory, these are the most effective units in the game. They can absolutely obliterate an approaching ground force even if greatly outnumbered. Their weakness: They are utterly helpless against air attacks, so use SAM sites to guard them if at all possible. Rocket soldiers usually prove pretty useless, but might scare off an air attack.

STEALTH TANK → Quite cool in presentation, but their effectiveness is limited since most players will have a mobile sensor unit or two. If they make the mistake of omitting this defense, take advantage of it. Best suited for long range recon.

DEVIL'S TONGUE → Killer against infantry, not so great against everything else. Still, it can be fun to have a small group of these to torch vulnerable infantry. A massed group of these popping up will make anyone nervous. Also very effective at frying engineers. Can be used to protect against the dreaded (and quite unbalanced) engineer rush.

BANSHEE → Fast and powerful, especially when grouped. It's always devastating when you can get enough of these to destroy someone's construction yard in one pass, but you should do that only if you know exactly where it is. As with all air units in this game, have one helipad per Banshee for maximum efficiency.

CYBER COMMANDO → The NOD base cracker extraordinaire. Load him and four cyborgs into a subterranean APC, and pop 'em up in the middle of their base. Most effective when used along with a frontal diversion or a second subterranean attack on the other side of the base. Too bad you can only have one at a time.

— ED LEE's best *Tiberian Sun* strategy involves *not* wearing pants. It's not pretty



Swarming lots of units is more important for NOD, whose units aren't as tough as GDI's, pound for pound. As always, mixing up the unit types, rather than just relying on one is a good idea, so you can defend against land- and air-based retaliation.

WINNING WITH NOD FOUR ADVANCED NOD BUILD ORDER STRATEGIES

Here is a detailed look at four different base-building strategies. Using bits and pieces from these, you can build your own strategy or combine all of them. After all, you aren't going to lose many games when you have six hunkered-down bases, air superiority, and constant Engineer rushes.

ENGINEER RUSH → Power Plant, Tiberium Refinery, War Factory (Harvester), Radar, Power, Hand Of Nod (start building engineers), Tech Center (Subterranean APC), Power NOTES → At the beginning of the game, send a unit to each corner of the map, so that once you have the APC and engineers you can send them right in. This is the quickest way to the engineer rush but it leaves you pretty defenseless in the early stages, but it is often worth the risk
STRENGTHS → Devastating strategy for 1 on 1 games making quick victory far too easy
WEAKNESSES → Expensive and you are very vulnerable to virtually any kind of attack

HUNKER DOWN (anti-engineer rush) → Power Plant, Hand Of Nod (crank out Cyborgs continuously and place them around structures), Tiberium Refinery, Laser, Laser, Power, Laser, Laser (all positioned for crossfire in key areas), Tiberium Refinery, Power, War Factory (Mobile Sensor Array, 2 Harvesters), Radar (crank out artillery and place around base), Tech Center, Power, Power, Power, and the dreaded Stealth Generator

NOTES → If playing against air-happy foes, be sure to build SAM sites and rocket soldiers. If enemies tend to play slim base at the beginning of games, then build tiberium factories and Har-

vesters early and worry about defense structures later

STRENGTHS → It's the most useful basic strategy. After all, a well-defended base that cranks out money puts you in good shape for whatever may happen
WEAKNESSES → By the time you are ready to attack, the enemy will likely have many more units (tanks, etc.) and you'd better be ready for a really looonng game

MULTIPLE BASE → Power Plant, Hand Of Nod, Tiberium Refinery, War Factory (Harvester then continue building Tick Tanks for defense, switching to Artillery when available), Radar, Power, Tech Center (mobile construction yard), Tiberium Refinery (and extra Harvester to place at new Construction Yard which should be near another field of Tiberium and close enough to your other base so you can easily protect both early), Power, Power, Stealth Generator (place at new base so no one knows it exists), Tiberium Refinery (and another MCV for new location)
NOTES → Best to build Power and other key structures at one well-defended base. Key to having multiple bases is stealthing and defending



them all. Building a base that can be easily overtaken is just a waste of money. Eventually you'll want to build a new War Factory, Hand Of Nod, etc. at each base so you can crank out the appropriate units to the right base
STRENGTHS → Great for controlling the map, mining Tiberium, and surprising your opponents
WEAKNESSES → Expensive and tends to water down each base, making enemy attacks very dangerous

COMMAND & BOMB → Same as Hunker Down to start (you'll need lots of money and defense to make this work since Banshees cost \$1500), then build at least eight helipads and eight Banshees (6 paid for each Banshee since their ammo runs out fast)

NOTES → You'll also need Mobile Sensor Arrays and scouts all over the map, since air units can't shoot what they can't see
STRENGTHS → Vicious attack on enemies who forget about air defense, and the best way to take out artillery.
WEAKNESSES → You can't completely win a game with just air units and defense, but constant attacks can give the enemy fits and keep them occupied while you start preparing the land rush



 **NASCAR**

LEGENDS

Coming Fall 1999

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Game Soundtracks

Music and games — they've gone together like quarter-pounders and fries ever since the days of *Space Invaders* and its ominous *Jaws*-like soundtrack (still one of the best pieces of game music ever). As modern game budgets soar higher than Andy Dick at the "Newsradio" rap party, more money has been thrown at "extraneous" features like music. We're seeing more and more soundtracks for games as a result. Here are some, but certainly not all, of the latest and greatest to hit our CD drives.

QUAKE RAGES ON

Controversial, in-your-face band Rage Against the Machine has reportedly been tapped to do tracks for the upcoming *Quake III* soundtrack. The soundtrack would also include Trent Reznor, who supplied the ambient background music to the original *Quake*. Also on the horizon: David Bowie does *Omikron*, '70s band Yes helps out with *Homeworld*, and of course, KISS croons the tunes for *KISS: Psycho Circus*. We certainly didn't see that one coming.



DUKE NUKEM

MUSIC TO SCORE BY

RELEASE DATE → 1999

NOTABLE ARTISTS → Wu-Tang Clan, Slayer, Xzibit, Megadeth

COMMENTS → The music is pretty mediocre, but there's quite a lot of extra stuff on this CD. Put it in your computer and you'll find an interactive strategy guide, screen savers, and audio samples from the *Duke* games, including the still unreleased may-never-see-the-light-of-day *Duke Nukem Forever*.
RATING → 3 stars (out of 4)

WHERE TO BUY → Cdnw.com

C&C: TIBERIAN SUN

RELEASE DATE → 1999

ARTISTS → Westwood's own Frank Klepacki did the whole thing
COMMENTS → It's that stuff you hear in the background during



tank rushes. This CD is pretty weak on its own merits, so don't quit your day job, dude ... wait, this is your day job. Never mind
RATING → 1 1/2 stars
WHERE TO BUY → Westwood.com

GRIM FANDANGO

RELEASE DATE → 1998

ARTISTS → Peter McConnell
COMMENTS → 32 tracks of big band jazz and lounge recreate the '20s atmosphere from the game. Great to put on in the background
RATING → 3 1/2 stars
WHERE TO BUY → Lucasarts.com

WIPEOUT XL

RELEASE DATE → 1996

NOTABLE ARTISTS → Chemical Brothers, Prigidity, Underworld, Leftfield, Future Sound of London, Orbital

COMMENTS → A compilation of early '90s electronic bands before they became over-marketed. Prigidity's "Firstarter" became a big hit just after this was released. In retrospect, it's one of the best and most unlikely electronic compilations ever

RATING → 4 stars
WHERE TO BUY → Cdnw.com



Every w... today on our website. w: flag whenever the heck makes us angry, and occasionally w: flag something just because it made it. Find out what we flagged today on www.xtra.com. You'll come, for the force, but you'll stay for the CRAZY NEWS AND RABES.

THE POWER METER

Movers move and shakers shake and the PCXL Power Meter has a familiar look.

THIS MONTH	LAST MONTH
1	2
2	3
3	7
4	4
5	-
6	1
7	6
8	-
9	8
10	9

INFOGRAMES → Falling off as new titles failed to impress (*Silver, Outcast*). While there's plenty for *Test Drive* fanatics, it's unclear where their next big title will come from.

GT INTERACTIVE → Still here ... while they're trying to get *Wheel of Time* published and with a couple of other minor titles, the heart has been ripped out of the company. Where they go now is anyone's guess.

FANTASY FRAG

THE IBOOK

WHY WE HATE IT → "Mmmm, comes in orange, too!" gushed our evil red-headed stepister mag, *MacAddict*, about the latest fruity toy to spew forth from the Bay Area Behemoth. Every left-dwelling, latté-sipping, balding 30-something is screaming in ecstasy over the vile spawn of the iMac. It was disgusting enough to think these superficial bastards were color-coordinating their couches and computers. Now they have a laptop that matches their "new" VW Beetle! When Steve I got my own TV movie" Jobs announced the latest twig on the Apple Tree, beaming like a new father over his blueberry baby, all these losers could say was "No grape, strawberry, or lime?" What's a yuppie to do?

HOW IT SHOULD BE FRAGGED → The thought of fragging an iBook user is more delicious than any sno-cone flavored piece of recycled plastic. If these things are so damn tasty, they should be forced to the hordes of Polo-wearing geeks who think they will look cool sitting around Starbucks, pocket protectors clipped to their chests, Palm Pilots strapped to their throats, knocking off Gucci belts, tapping away at their candy-coated crap (so-called) computers. "Think different?" Try "Think cheap marketing play."

MP3 AND YOU A WINNING COMBINATION

Hi, I'm **PCKL Ed**. You may remember me from such X-tra pieces as "Warez: Where Can I Get Them?" and "The Myriad Uses of Usenet." Many of you (as well as our good selves) are completely "sold" on the wonderful new format known as MP3. But how will they relate to games? Actually, we don't know, but they're pretty damn cool.

*NOTE: WE DO NOT CONDONE THE PIRACY OF COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL AND WOULD LIKE TO ADD THAT WE PERSONALLY OWN EVERY CD EVER MADE IN THE HISTORY OF EVERNESS.

and you can sort all the matches by ping time, line speed, bit rate, and file size. Due to the program's popularity, you might run into some lag issues, but it's worth the wait. Download the beta from www.napster.com.



Audiograbbler

This is one of the many programs that let you rip audio tracks off a CD and convert them to MP3s. You simply put the CD in your drive,

select the track, then hit a button. Most of these programs require a registration fee to be fully functional, however. To find 'em, start with a good downloading site like www.download.com.

Shoutcast

This is like the comeback of pirate radio, but with a potentially much larger audience. Shoutcast lets you listen to web radio programs broadcast from home computers. Listeners with the latest version of WinAmp can visit the Shoutcast website to find a list of amateur stations sorted by connection speed. Or, if you have DJ-ing aspirations, you can set up your own station, complete with spoken bits and even prompts. Definitely worth a look, er, listen. Get it from www.shoutcast.com.



WinAmp

"The Little MP3 Player That Could," WinAmp is the best player out there bar none. Its biggest advantages over the competition: It's fast, it's streamlined, and it has a clean interface. Skins are also super cool and add personality to your WinAmp. The latest version, 2.5, is still completely free and fully functional. Get it from www.winamp.com.



Napster

Now this is what I want out of my Internet. It's basically a big-assed filesharing hub that allows you to log in and download MP3s from your friends' computers while they download stuff from yours. A search engine lets you find just what you're looking for (and if it's not there today, it might be there tomorrow or an hour from now),



ON THE COVER

WHO'S THAT GIRL? IT'S CORDELIA

In case you're fantasizing about the model doing a "Janet" on our *Rolling X-tra* cover, her name is Cordelia. You can see more of her (and we mean a LOT more) at her website, www.cordeliapix.com.



GAMESCAN HOTLIST

IN THE TRADITION OF THE ANNUAL ROLLING STONE HOTLIST, CONSIDERINGLY TELLING US WHAT'S COOL BY THEIR SNOBBY STANDARDS, HERE'S THE ROLLING X-TRA HOTLIST, GIVING YOU THE STRAIGHT DOPE ON WHAT'S HOT AND WHAT'S NOT IN THE MONTHS AHEAD.



EARTH 2150

DEVELOPER → Topware
PUBLISHER → TBA
RELEASE DATE → Late 1999
HOTTEST GAME IS GETTING READY TO EXPLODE → Another RTS coming into an already crowded market, *Earth 2150* players must figure out how to escape Earth in the year 2150, when the planet's shifted orbit brings us closer and closer to the sun. Deal with rising sea levels and meteor showers while fighting off enemies and getting off the "big blue marble."
NEXT YEAR'S FAD THAT WILL REPLACE IT → Games in which the player must use their wits and a ball of yarn to survive in a warm, fuzzy future filled with bunnies and kittens



SOVEREIGN

DEVELOPER → Verant Interactive
PUBLISHER → 989 Studios
RELEASE DATE → 2000
HOTTEST NEXT GAME THE EVERQUEST GUYS ARE WORKING ON → Not much is known about *Sovereign* yet, but essentially it's a massively-multiplayer RTS. Rather than accumulating hordes of disgusting giant rats, this time you need treaties with real people to watch your back as armies amass when you're offline
NEXT YEAR'S FAD THAT WILL REPLACE IT → Getting off your fat ass and exploring the realtime, massively-multiplayer persistent world called "real life"



ARMORED FIST 3

DEVELOPER → NovaLogic
PUBLISHER → NovaLogic
RELEASE DATE → September 1999
HOTTEST USE OF TREADS SINCE K-MART TRAX SHOES → NovaLogic is known for its action-oriented combat simulations, and *Armored Fist 3* seems to follow in that decidedly blast-em-up tradition. Using NovaLogic's Voxelspace 32 engine, which does its best to power a game without 3D acceleration, *Armored Fist 3* puts you in control of the hottest tank on the planet, the M1A2 Abrams Main Battle Tank (for the xth time). Players will protect ground troops and light vehicles as they barrel through buildings and trees in the missions. Features include support for up to 32 people over NovaWorld
NEXT YEAR'S FAD THAT WILL REPLACE IT → *Greasy Fist 3* — A Tank Mechanic Simulation



SUMMONER

DEVELOPER → Volition
PUBLISHER → THQ
RELEASE DATE → 1999
HOTTEST RPG FROM A DEVELOPER WE NEVER THOUGHT WOULD PUT OUT AN RPG → From the folks who brought us one of the hottest space sims last year, *Descent: Freespace*, comes *Summoner*. It's a game in which you play either an ancient bringer of demons, a supernatural servant, or an elemental creature. Joined on your quest by three young adventurers, you must travel across several worlds to find the Summoner's rings. Basically, it's that orc and dwarf, fantasy-type stuff
NEXT YEAR'S FAD THAT WILL REPLACE IT → Other unexpected developer projects, such as Wizard-Works doing a good game

THE WOMEN WE LOVE TO PLAY

Occasionally in the wacky world of entertainment, a babe's life-in-the-public-eye cycle is cut abruptly short, due to a contract dispute or an odd (and utterly useless) desire to be more than just a pretty face/body. In the history of babedom it's a mighty rare occurrence that the new babe is actually better than the original. When Nell McAndrew decided to ditch the *Tomb Raider* clothes (and her hair) for the big *Playboy* bucks, Eidos quickly moved to get a new hottie to don the tight blue uniform and oh-so short shorts. After meeting this Holland-born beauty, we can honestly say she kicks Nell's rather large ass in every way. Sometimes change is very, very good.

THE NEW LARA

REPLACEMENT BABES

In our exhaustive 15-minute search, we found only three other times in entertainment history when the replacement was hotter than the "replacee"



OLD



NEW



OLD



NEW



OLD



NEW

SHOW → *Beverly Hills 90210*
ORIGINAL → Shelley Long
WHY SHE LEFT → To pursue interests like divorce, straight-to-video movies, and general bitchiness
REPLACEMENT → Sherry Stringfield
WHY SHE WAS BETTER → See picture for two very good reasons

SHOW → *Cheers*
ORIGINAL → Kirstie Alley
WHY SHE LEFT → To start a "real" acting career, appearing in such classics as *The Brady Bunch Movie*
REPLACEMENT → Julia Duffy
WHY SHE WAS BETTER → Until she hit the all-you-can-eat buffets, Kirstie was quite a hottie

SHOW → *Designing Women*
ORIGINAL → Delta Burke
WHY SHE LEFT → Let's just say she "grew" out of the role
REPLACEMENT → Julia Duffy
WHY SHE WAS BETTER → In truth, by the time Burke left the show, Martin Brando in a wig would have been far better

The Heat-O-Meter

THE ROLLING X-TRA EDITION

WHAT'S HOT

THANKSGIVING → Gather with a group of people you hardly know, eat strange food, avoid upsetting anyone, and fall into a deep sleep while watching football when it's all over — sounds like *Everquest*, but not as much fun.

DREAMCAST RELEASED → How can Sega possibly top the successes of the 32X and Saturn? Easy. Release a console that runs on Windows. It ships with a pack-in game called *Crash & Reboot*.

BETTER THAN CATS? → Id sent *Quake III* on a multi-city bus tour. The graphics and lighting effects are great, but we thought the "Space Marine on Ice" musical number was a bit much.

FOOTBALL SEASON → We haven't enjoyed pfskin this much since Jack In The Box announced the Bacon Bacon Cheeseburger.

SHE REALLY DOES HAVE EVERYTHING → Barbie is getting her own line of PCs, courtesy of Mattel Media. With all the jobs she has and all that crap she buys, she needs one just to do her taxes.

WHAT'S COLD

TECHNOLOGY BLUES → New boards from the two major 3D card manufacturers, 3Dfx and nVidia, will be released every six months. Isn't there something wrong with the industry when six generations of hardware appear in three years and Ion Storm can't even release one game?

FATALITY! → Co-creator of the *Mortal Kombat* series, John Tobias, has left Midway along with two other veteran programmers. Midway tried to get the team to stay, but couldn't punch in the right pad combination fast enough.

BERN OUT → Sega of America's president, Bernie Stolar, was axed right before Dreamcast's release. It may have been because he kept calling it the 128X and referred to the PlayStation 2 as "my pink slip in a box."

IMAC-ALIKES → Apple has begun suing manufacturers who crank out PCs that look too much like the iMac. Shouldn't the PC guys be able to countersue Apple for making a product that looks too much like a computer?

PC FISHING → Games for people who call *Solitaire* "a rollercoaster ride of pure adrenaline." What's next? A multimedia update of *The Quiet Game*?



GAMESCAN



TACHYON: THE FRINGE

DEVELOPER → NovaLogic

PUBLISHER → NovaLogic

RELEASE DATE → Fall 1999

HOTTEST SPACE SIM THAT DOESN'T INVOLVE CHRIS ROBERTS IN ANY WAY → NovaLogic's shot at the space sim market already looks

impressive, with massive space stations and colonies to explore, and the ability to hire different wingmen to help you cause. Explosions and lighting effect graphics appear on

par with some of the best space sims in this crowded market. And, Bruce

"Evil Dead" Campbell will voice the game's hero. We can already hear

the voice-overs: "I have just destroyed the mothership, now give me some sugar, baby!"

NEXT YEAR'S FAD THAT WILL REPLACE IT → Tacky Don: The

Fringe Jacket → Play a Mafia figure striving to stay in control despite his abominable taste in fashion



SPEC OPS 2: US ARMY GREEN BERETS

DEVELOPER → Zombie

PUBLISHER → Ricard Games

RELEASE DATE → November 1999

HOTTEST GAME TO MAKE A BET

SEEM COOL → With multiplayer for

up to 32, Zombie has gone all out to make its sequel a winner. The action/strategy title moves from jungles to ice fields, and includes sev-

eral types of missions, including CTF, Defend and Destroy, and Capture

and Hold. Lighting is also a focus of the game, as players can light up the

night with weapons, or shoot out overhead lights to stay hidden

NEXT YEAR'S FAD THAT WILL REPLACE IT → Morio 3D, a first-

person action game in which you don a beret and set out for your

White House internship. Wait, did we say first-person? Noooooo!

GAME KILLER

BURN, BEEYATCH, BURN!

Purification rituals, specifically ones involving fire, have been used for centuries to spiritually cleanse evil from the soul. But even the most stalwart PCXL editors flinched when faced by a game brimming with evil and hopelessly devoid of any quantifiable "soul" whatsoever. *Backstreet Boys: Puzzles in Motion* is just such a game.

The Backstreet Boys' crimes are legion: Menudo-ish studio-mixed harmonies, dance choreography that makes Paula Abdul look like friffin' Barishnikov, and that one dude who appears to be wearing a fuzzy mop on his head. Oh, and then there's the alleged "game" — a series of sliding-block picture puzzles for people who think playing the "Feud" is a Mensa-level activity. Soul or no soul, that disc was gonna be crispy.

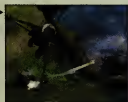
The impromptu boy band barbecue came courtesy of our trusty blowtorch, "Ol' Flamey." As the blue-white flame hit its silvery hide, a whiney, high-pitched scream (like a sissy boy trying to hit a high note in a power ballad) erupted from the game. Without a soul, purification could not take place — the game melted like Michael Jackson's new nose. In death, just as in life, the stink that Backstreet Boys' *Puzzles in Motion* emitted was really, really bad ... and not a little toxic.



This is very, very dangerous. So, make sure you try it when on else is watching.



GAME TOUR '99 A DAY IN THE LIFE

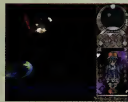


HALO

DEVELOPER → Bungie
PUBLISHER → Bungie
RELEASE DATE → Unknown
HOTTEST GAME THAT HAS US DROOLING OVER THE POSSIBILITIES → Though what Bungie has shown so far isn't more than technology demos, the game engine-powered short left most grizzled game journalists in awestruck amazement. With some of the most stunning graphics yet seen and the ability to jump in and control almost every vehicle in the war-style game, expect this to be a showstopper — if it ever comes out. We trust Bungie will be up to the task of getting this to market, and making it one of the most stunning titles ever, despite their support for Macs.

NEXT YEAR'S FAD THAT WILL REPLACE IT

→ **Halo**, the angel action game. You play Michael Landon, a weepy but tough-and-tumble angel who must rescue moons from their everyday troubles, like losing their car keys.



FADING SUNS: NOBLE ARMADA

DEVELOPER → Holistic Design
PUBLISHER → Ricard Games
RELEASE DATE → Late 1999
HOTTEST GAME SET IN A UNIVERSE WE'VE NEVER HEARD OF → Based on the Fading Suns table-top fantasy RPG world, Noble Armada is a real-time 3D starship raiding and trading game with fully customizable characters and fleets. Play as one of four factions intent on controlling the entire universe.

NEXT YEAR'S FAD THAT WILL REPLACE IT → A 3D strategy game in which the player must plot and scheme to end up as the universe's biggest loser — the conqueror's bitch, if you will.

PC game journalism is about more than the visceral thrill of a *Quake III* LAN deathmatch or the rush of accomplishment when you finally beat *Half-Life* at the office. It's also about schmoozing, boredom, and touring French developers who blather on for hours about their games' intricacies, rather than actually showing the game. Yes, getting publicity for your game is no easy feat. The treacherous waters of gaming PR begin with publicity tours, where game companies show off their latest and greatest, and PCXL editors offer their latest and greatest excuses for getting out of appointments. So, dear reader, explore this typical game tour stop at PCXL, and you'll soon realize that working for a gaming magazine isn't all fun and games.

1:47 p.m. → Company X arrives for their 2:00 appointment with PCXL for a game demo, and politely take seats in the lobby.
2:15 p.m. → PCXL editors return from two-hour lunch at Redneck Earl's House of Bones, where they had scripted and set-up the ultimate mob movie death scene (can't give it away but it involves a baptism, and a wedding in an opera house with a toll booth).
2:17 p.m. → Editors greet public relations people, game producers, developers, and some French guy from Company X, telling the group that the demo room will be ready in "just a minute."

2:35 p.m. → Having forgotten to reserve a demo room, PCXL editors are forced to host the demo either in an abandoned broom closet with a Tandy 1000 computer, or at Mike Salmon's desk, whichever is cleaner.
2:37 p.m. → Demo begins in abandoned broom closet.

2:45 p.m. → Company X representatives hit editors with barrage of business cards, greetings, small talk. Wait for PCXL editors to return the favor.

2:46 p.m. → In the throes of a horrible, gripping silence, editors check their watches.

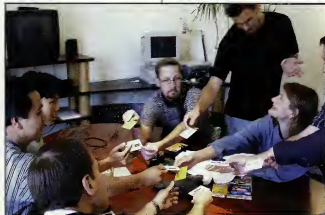
2:50 p.m. → Game producer begins presentation with vague promises about revolutionary graphics, followed by a long, looping speech about the game's back story, and explains how it will be different from the eight other titles on the market in which you must rescue Benny Hill from a post-apocalyptic future.

4:05 p.m. → Producer's speech on back story ends. French guy's explanation of the thought process behind the game's sound menu interface begins.

4:55 p.m. → Eager to keep their promise of actually showing some of the game, the French guy boots the game, bypassing the QuickStart option and going straight into the sound menu.

4:57 p.m. → Sound menu crashes. Editors fall into a deep trance.

5:05 p.m. → Editors temporarily jarred into consciousness when developers promise to show "revolutionary graphics" using EMixels (pixels shaped like Ed McMahon).



As Salmon eyes a random PR chick, the random smelly French game designer sneers at Dan and the other random editorial types.

BACKSTAGE AT GAMETOUR '99

Miles of gears and pulleys must work in perfect synchronization so you can read this magazine (and also so we can hit on PR girls and get free stuff).

BACKSTAGE PUBLIC RELATIONS BITTIES



WHAT → Not girls tell an editor how "nice, they look today!" even though the editor is wearing the same dirty jersey he had on last time the PR girl saw him.

FUNCTION → To make us believe we actually have a chance with them.
ACTUAL IMPACT ON GAME PREVIEW/REVIEW → A lot. Keep it up ladies, and please answer our letters!

SEEDY URBAN BOB CRAVIL



WHAT → PR snir and developers take editors to the seediest clubs in town.
FUNCTION → To get editors drunk enough to promise coverage for their game.

ACTUAL IMPACT ON GAME PREVIEW/REVIEW → Depends on who pays for the drinks and lid dips.

PATHETIC THOCHICKES



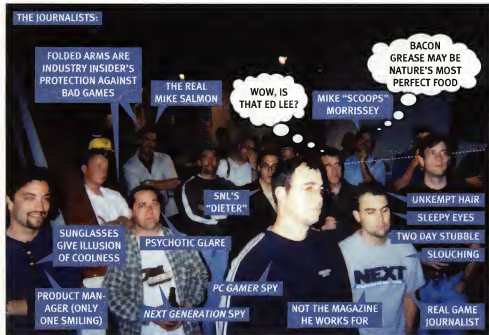
WHAT → Free game-related junk.
FUNCTION → To keep their games out of the Hall of Ass.
ACTUAL IMPACT ON GAME PREVIEW/REVIEW → Absolutely none — ah — we mean, a lot — especially the free game-related beer and shot glasses.

5:07 p.m. → Revolutionary EMixels graphics engine crashes.
5:08 p.m. → Developer forges ahead with presentation, using charcoal sketches of the game's cutscenes, and a crude pantomime to act out the story arc.
5:12 p.m. → Three employees of Company X seriously injured after acting out the game's climactic crate-smashing sequence.
5:45 p.m. → Paramedics leave; PR reps leave behind "beta" copies of the game, cheap black T-shirts, and stuffed animals which will later be used as "fabulous" contest prizes.
6:15 p.m. → Nine out of 10 discs are lost around PCXL office. The tenth is installed on Rob Smith's computer. The game crashes and formats Rob's hard drive.
6:18 p.m. → Using charcoal sketches and crude pantomime, Rob explains why companies with French guys should never be trusted.

Beer and Snap-shots

THE ANATOMY OF AN INDUSTRY PARTY

Warning: These pictures portray the seamy underbelly of game events. Our intent is not to titillate, but to show what *really* goes on at an industry party. Pregnant women and those with heart conditions should look away immediately.



If you'd like to pretend you're at an industry party in the safety of your own home, grab a beer, stand in front of a computer, fold your arms, and attempt to make small talk with your cat.



Where the girls aren't: PCXL's own Mike Morrissey and Chuck Osborn learn too late that Geek-a-fest '99 isn't a good place to meet women. Rest easy, the gene pool is safe.

GAMESCAN



LEGACY OF KAIN: SOUL REAVER

DEVELOPER → Crystal Dynamics

PUBLISHER → Eidos

RELEASE DATE → Fall 1999

HOTTEST VOODOO-INSPIRED GAME THAT ISN'T SHADOW MAN →

A Tomb Raider-esque third-person game with style and dark atmosphere, Kain already looks incredible on the PlayStation, and beta versions of the PC game appear even better. Waiting for the next Tomb Raider? Get this instead. After all, hasn't your lifelong dream always been to become a vampire who roams the world, harvesting the souls of men?

NEXT YEAR'S FAD THAT WILL

REPLACE IT → More games involving magic—not the cool kind like voodoo, but the horrible kind with David Copperfield and Doug Henning, where you must control the magicians in a quest to find a wife that's much too hot for them



SEPTERRA CORE

DEVELOPER → Valkyrie Studios

PUBLISHER → Monolith

RELEASE DATE → Fall 1999

HOTTEST RPG TO COME FROM FORMER BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD

WORKERS → Though we have our doubts about Monolith, we're looking forward to this, only because this game started as the work of designers of B&B: Virtual Stupidity. The console-style RPG, like most RPGs, involves party-based exploring and adventuring

NEXT YEAR'S FAD THAT WILL

REPLACE IT → Games developed by former "Real World" cast members, like SnooRockett, a first-person shooter from Puck, and Cry Out Loud, an emotional adventure game from that hot, whiny drunk girl on the "Real World: Hawaii"



LEGEND OF THE BLADE MASTERS

DEVELOPER → Ronin Entertainment
PUBLISHER → Ripcord Games
RELEASE DATE → November 1999
HOTTEST GAUNTLET RIP-UP IN THE LAST THREE MONTHS → This Gauntlet-inspired RPG has players hacking and slashing their way through lush dungeons and anime-style enemies with up to five players. Ronin promises more than 5,000 polys per scene and resolutions of up to 1600x1200. And exactly how we are supposed to crank up our systems to that resolution? Since when did we need a Cray Supercomputer with the power of the WarGames WOPR to run a 1999 version of Gauntlet?

NEXT YEAR'S FAD THAT WILL REPLACE IT → More cheap Gauntlet-inspired games that will probably sell 3,000 copies — yet still somehow convince other companies to keep remaking Gauntlet



LEGO RACERS

DEVELOPER → High Voltage
PUBLISHER → LEGO Media
RELEASE DATE → Out now
HOTTEST RACING GAME USING SQUARE CARS → Build your cars with Danish blocks, customize your driver and his/her license, and race away through 12 tracks in four LEGO worlds — or compete against other LEGO characters (either the computer or a friend) in split screen racing mode. LEGOs haven't been this much fun since we used to lure little kids into our cars with them
NEXT YEAR'S FAD THAT WILL REPLACE IT → A first-person adventure game set in a world made of Lincoln Logs, Tinker Toys and Six Million Dollar Man playsets

PCXL P.I.

YOU GOT QUESTIONS? WE GET ANSWERS

Once again, PCXL goes undercover to ask the tough questions that nobody wants to answer.

ELECTRONICS BOUTIQUE

THE SETUP → Our undercover operative spent about 20 minutes smacking a copy of Recoil with a baseball bat, sitting on it, stabbing it with scissors, and generally making its life even more miserable. He then attempted to return it to EB for cash.

PCXL → [puts battered copy of Recoil on checkout counter] Hi, I'd like to return this game.

EB → [trying not to laugh] Uhh ... okay. Do you have a receipt?

PCXL → No, my mom sent it to me. It might've gotten banged up a little in shipping.

EB → I'm sorry, sir, but we can't accept any returns without a receipt. And it would have to be in resellable condition.

PCXL → Hey, it's not a bad game. You could probably sell it.

EB → The packaging is badly damaged, sir.

PCXL → But it's still sealed!

EB → I'm sorry ... there's really nothing we can do.

PCXL → Nothing? My mom just wanted to make me happy.

EB → We could try taking it as a trade-in.

PCXL → Okay.

EB → [checks computer] I'm sorry ... this is a game we don't accept.

PCXL → You don't? Why?

EB → I don't know. That's what it says here.

PCXL → That sounds like discrimination. Is it because of the "man"?

EB → Sorry. It looks like you're stuck with it.

PCXL → Oh well, back into the "fabulous" prize vault!

Follow-up investigation: Why won't Electronics Boutique take back Recoil? To find out, we called EB Customer Service.

EB → This is EBWorld Customer Service. How may I help you?

PCXL → I tried trading in a copy of Recoil, but my local EB wouldn't take it. Why is that?

EB → Hmm ... there shouldn't be a reason. What's the name? Recoil?

PCXL → Yeah.

EB → [checks computer] No, I don't see any reason they shouldn't accept it.

PCXL → So, do you think they might be prejudiced against Recoil?

EB → Umm ... no ... I don't think it's anything like that. They may have too many copies of Recoil already.

PCXL → So, it doesn't sound like they're very good salesmen, huh?

EB → [laughs] Maybe too many copies were returned.

PCXL → So, if I go to another EB, they'll take it back.

EB → Probably.

PCXL → Do you have a list of stores that are good at selling Recoil?

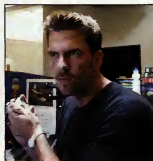
EB → Umm ... no.



FREESTUFFWELOVE

(AND WON'T GIVE BACK, SO QUIT CALLING ALREADY!)

Let's put this simply. People send us stuff for FREE and we shamelessly promote it in the magazine. Creative Labs was kind enough to send us their miniature 64MB MP3 player, the Nomad. Then, after I, your poor, humble editor-in-chief, got spoiled using the player during workouts, in the car, to avoid my



girlfriend, etc., I got a call from Creative asking for it back. What? Needless to say I haven't called them back and have avoided all phone calls, hoping they will "just go away." If you guys at Creative are reading this — you can't have it back. It's mine, mine, mine!!!

For those of you who have never experienced the portable pleasure of an MP3 player you are really missing out. For \$233.95 you get the best quality Walkman you'll ever find, an FM tuner, and a digital voice recorder, all in a package small enough to fit in Gary Coleman's shirt pocket. With 64MB, you can record nearly two full-length CDs or visit any of the numerous websites which offer free MP3 samples. Downloading



Mike lives in fear that the "bad men" will take away his toy.

files is fast, the software is easy to use, and the CDDSSB system even labels your songs automatically. My (and I repeat, my) Nomad is with me every day and gets more use than my mini-disc player.

GIRLFRIEND(S) OF THE MONTH SHARE AND SHARE-ALIKE

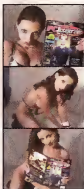
The amazing success of our Girlfriend of the Month section has caused a problem we've not encountered before — too many women. To help us solve this dilemma we're asking you to vote for your favorite PCXL Reader Girlfriend. We used our celebrity supercomputer to get opinions from the "experts" on each candidate. Please remember if you are actually fortunate enough to snag a bird of your own, be sure to share it with your extended PCXL cult ... uhh, family.

PRIVATE DANCER

THE SKINNY → There was some question as to whether this fine young thang was actually eligible for our contest since she is something of a professional (she has an adult website at www.davia.com). However, since one of our readers is actually dating her (we have proof, don't worry) she is perfectly eligible. Besides, she did a private online striptease while holding a copy of PCXL — you go girl!

DREW CAREY SAYS → "Fat guys don't get laid unless they're on TV and go to a lot of strip joints so I figure no one is more qualified than me to judge sexy women. That said, Davia is a tasty little seductress who can perform on my lap any day."

TO VOTE → privatedancer@pcxl.com



COUCH POTATO



THE SKINNY → Another proud reader sent us this fetching photo of his little woman getting

real comfy on the couch (those teddy bears are hers, right?)
WOODY ALLEN SAYS → "She's so young, ahh ... uhh ... she's ripe like a peach. If only she were Asian and related to me in a non-relation kind of way, I don't know what I'd do!" (Special note: The young lady is of age and everyone knows Woody Allen is a sicko, so don't blame us for what he might have said)

TO VOTE → couchpotato@pcxl.com

RED SHOE DIARIES



THE SKINNY → This more than slightly out-of-focus picture leaves a lot to the imagination, but the red shoes definitely signify something — we're not sure what, but no doubt it's something important
DAVID DUCHOVNY SAYS → "Skin and bones, that's just the way I like 'em. Reminds me of my wife Tia. Actually, I think it is Tia!"

TO VOTE → redshoediaries@pcxl.com

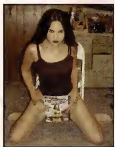
GOTH GIRL

THE SKINNY → This young lady is actually a reader of the magazine who loves the humor, digs games, and has a propensity for putting our magazine in all the wrong places

MARILYN MANSON

SAYS → "I'd kill a cow and drink its blood for this beauty. Give me one month with her and she'd have skin as icy blue as my personal slave girl Rose McGowan"

TO VOTE → gothgirl@pcxl.com



HOT MAMA



THE SKINNY → A reader and his wife were kind enough to send in some photos from around the house, which

may or may not be in a nudist colony
JAMES WILDER SAYS → "I love older women, but where is the meat on her bones? Kirstie would eat her as an appetizer"

TO VOTE → hotmama@pcxl.com

CAPTAIN KANGAROO

THE SKINNY

→ Proof that we have readers in Australia. We suppose that this picture should have a

tagline like "Australian for girl!"

PAUL HOGAN SAYS → "If they're good enough to wrestle, then they're good enough for mating, mate. G'day from the land down under"

TO VOTE → captainkangaroo@pcxl.com



THE NEXT DOOR

THE SKINNY

→ A happy and proud reader who also appears to have problems lighting his subjects sent in a series of photos.

FREDDIE PRINCE JR.

SAYS → "Even if my movies suck, they still make a crapload of money. I'm a big star and I can have any girl I want. So there!"

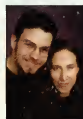
TO VOTE → girlnextdoor@pcxl.com



THE ONE AND ONLY "SEND US MORE BEER THAN TED" CONTEST

The crazy reader with the most P. Whipped e-mail address of all time

(tedloveslori@cantellyou.com) sent us two six-packs of liquid bread and has threatened to send us more. Any



reader who sends us more beer than Ted will receive our latest "fabulous" prize: One legitimately good game and two horrid

games that make the other one look that much better. Send beer to:

FREE BEER IS GOOD

c/o PC Accelerator
150 North Hill Drive
Brisbane, CA 94005

The reader who sends us the most beer by November 27, 1999, will get the coveted "fabulous" prize. In the case of a tie, the quality of beer will be the tie-breaker. Be warned that Ted has threatened to beat his own record, and he's just crazy enough

to do it. (Hey Ted, sorry about the condition of the picture you sent us. We had to wrestle former Managing Editor Carrie to get the beer and she's got some wicked claws!)

SPECIAL NOTE → If you aren't old enough to buy beer, then there's always some shady-looking guy hanging around the liquor stores who'll do it for you if you tip him a couple of bucks. Or, if that doesn't work, feel free to try the homeless — they don't have anything better to do.



(Above) Beer. (Left) Ted and (we assume) Lori.

FANTASY Quake II

THE ULTIMATE QUAKE MANAGEMENT SIM — ALSO THE ONLY ONE

Mallfunctioning computers, streaky players, and a cool-as-ice Ed Lee were the highlights of Week Two. Quite simply, if you didn't pick Ed for your team, then it was time to start looking forward to next year.

WHO'S HOT

ED LEE → En fuego! Ed won every single match, often doubling the score of the second place winner. Cries of cheating are already being heard throughout the league

KYLE → A score of 39 for five games is well above his average **MIKE S** → With Rob out, Mike got second place by default **MIKE M** → Improved with each game and actually overtook Dan for fourth place — a solid investment

WHO'S NOT

ROB → Computer problems, and a battle with old age led to the biggest bust in draft history. Rumors he'll resurface with a new hard drive give hope to those

unlucky souls who forked out his ridiculously high \$33 price tag **DAN** → Cruised along at his usual pace, but as predicted, Frag Pipe lava troubles kept him from reaching his average

ERIC → Three great games and two heinous ones make him the Mac-bust of the draft

(It's still not too late to get in on the fun. Draft your own league now! See the October Issue or www.pcxl.com for details)

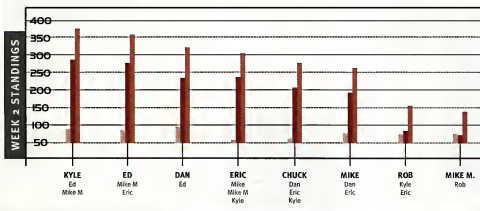
THE SCORING

ACTION	POINTS
Kill	+1
First Place	+7
Second Place	+3
Third Place	+1
Double Kill	+2
Triple Kill	+3
Whining	-1
First Kill	+8
First blood	+1
Lost 0-20	-1
Best time/taunt	+1



THE LEAGUE

With 200 bones at stake, Rob and Mike M (the only two to draft Rob) tried just about everything to get Rob's computer up and running. After searching hopelessly for a virgin to sacrifice, they finally gave up. Kyle's distinct lack of skill hasn't stopped him from taking an early lead. "Not for long," said a determined and out of the competition Mike S. Stay tuned!



INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Ed →	Mike S →
Week 1 → 66	Week 1 → 41
Week 2 → 188	Week 2 → 112
Total → 254	Total → 153
Chuck →	Dan →
Week 1 → 28	Week 1 → 33
Week 2 → 86	Week 2 → 51
Total → 114	Total → 84
Rob →	Mike M →
Week 1 → 64	Week 1 → 12
Week 2 → 13	Week 2 → 59
Total → 77	Total → 71
Kyle →	Eric →
Week 1 → 8	Week 1 → DNP
Week 2 → 39	Week 2 → 30
Total → 47	Total → 30

NOTABLE OFFICE QUOTES

"Let them play Recoil!"
— Mike Salmon, on whether or not we should give Half-life to a reader

"You know chess is all the rage with 'the Kids'"
— Random guy pitching Chessmaster 7000

"I love Biguns!"
— Mike Salmon talking about his new favorite web page

"I took ads from hookers."
— Philip, referring to his first job in the "journalism" field

"Caressing is more me."
— Mike Salmon

"Damn it, you can't turn on X-tra like a faucet!"
— Ed Lee making lame excuses about missing deadlines



VH1 BEHIND THE GAME

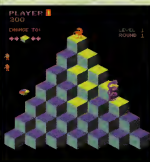
"We whored out the game to anyone who would pay us."

In 1983, Q-Bert was on top of the world. An unqualified success in arcades, it was considered by many to be a classic. Sales were brisk and the reviews enthusiastic — until the balloon of success burst and it all came crashing down. First, the supporting cast — Coily, Ugg, and Wrongway, parted ways with Q-Bert after bitter infighting and contract disputes. Then the licensing gold mine started to run dry. Then came the drugs, the wild parties, and the hookers. A reckless ride on a spinning colored pad ended in a near-fatal accident involving a minivan and a giant public sculpture. Q-Bert was out of control.

"@!#?@!"

It was a wake up call. The red bug-eyed thingy voluntarily checked into

rehab a few weeks later. Now it's 1999 and the once foul-mouthed Q-Bert has cleaned up his act. He's ready for a comeback — on "Behind the Game."



Q-Bert was on top of his game (no pun intended) in this 1983 file photo.

FEEDBACK

letters@pcxl.com

→ We receive so many letters aimed at individual members of our PCXL family that we thought it might be a good idea to let them answer their own freakin' mail for a change. As always, if you have anything you'd like to say, send us e-mail at letters@pcxl.com. We can't guarantee we won't make fun of you behind your back, but if you're really lucky we'll make fun of you in print.

GET A LIFE!

What the hell were you morons thinking? Out of no less than 12 shots of Jeri Ryan [Sept. '99], you printed the one on page 17 backwards! *EVERY* Trekker knows that her implant thing goes over her left eye!

Mushu



MIKE SALMON

RESPONDS → This is the saddest, geekiest letter I've ever read. The "implants" on her eye weren't the ones I was paying attention to ... if you know what I mean (but so obviously don't).



We don't care where that damn implant is supposed to be as long as we get to enjoy the two that matter.

GIA PETS

(Chuck's note: This was not written by Chuck)

Dear Gia,
Is it true that you have dated Chuck, the editor, and are unable to cope with emotions you never had before, and therefore feel the need to shoot him down, kneel him in the groin, etc.?

Anonymous
(Not Chuck)



GIA (NOT CHUCK)

RESPONDS → Dear Anonymous ... or should I say Chuck's mom? Chuck and I have never dated, nor would we no matter how much he begged.

While I'm attracted to his rugged, masculine good looks and devil-may-care attitude, I've come to realize that he's just too good for me. Maybe someday I'll settle for, err, settle down with somebody else, but until then, my heart is like a country divided by love and tears.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Of the four issues of your mag that I have, two of them have everybody's favorite editor, Dan, writing First Person. My question is this, "Does he ever change the opening line?" They are, I admit, a wee bit different, but they're pretty close. Tell me what you think:

July #11: "I just finished playing the test demo of *Quake III* and I have to admit, I'm not that impressed."

September #13: "I just finished the big, bad *Kingpin* and frankly I'm not so impressed."

Spooky, huh?

Matt Rooney



DAN RESPONDS

→ I just finished reading your so-called letter and I've got to say, I'm not very impressed. [Dor-nit, I think they're on to me! Ohhh, fiddlesticks!]

RABID FANS

We all know that Windows just keeps getting slower and

slower. That's why I think we should all rid ourselves of the evil presence of Windows and install Linux!! And another thing, Mike Morrissey sucks!! Bring back Dan. DAN DAN DAN!!! LINUX LINUX LINUX!!!!

"Linux Man"
Devon Tucker



MIKE MORRISSEY

RESPONDS → Hey Devon, I bet you were a big fan of Betamax, Le Cor, and 8-track tapes, too. Sorry I don't meet your high journalistic standards. Your letter sucks. Bring back Matt Rooney! MATT MATT MATT!

THE FANDOM MENACE

I recently played the new Star Wars game [The *Phantom Menace*], which you gave a bad rating [5], but I found it to be quite fun (any Star Wars fan would). I think that you should rate games on how the fans like them, have a voting system by which people write in and give you the rating, then you can take the average of all the votes. You could put this beside your rating. For this game I would have given it an eight out of 10. I was also wondering if you could put a new rating in your next issue.

Bigred red



CHUCK RESPONDS

→ Okay, my original rating of 5 mixed with your rating of 8 brings the final score to ... 5. Sorry, the point of game reviews is to warn people off what we think are bad games (or recommend good ones) before they buy them, not after. Otherwise, what's the point?

YOU DEFINITELY MADE THE RIGHT CHOICE

Having read the little editorial thingy in the back of the August '99 issue on the remakes of arcade classics from the '80s, I thought the whole thing a little ironic, since my father was the developer and programmer for



Ahhh, this is how we spent much of junior high.

the original *Centipede*. He worked at Atari Inc., and then later as it became Atari Games (splitting from Atari Inc into Atari Corp and the Namco-owned coin-op division, Atari Games). Anyway, he picked up a copy of the *Centipede* remake for the PC by Hasbro Interactive. I played it for about eight minutes, pulled out the CD, and went back to *Half-Life*. Point being ... the classics are great fun, but remaking them is a novelty thing and rarely involves enough glitter to attract my attention.

Greg Logg

Sen. Tech. Support Engineer
V-Communications Tech. Support



CENTIPEDE

RESPONDS → Look here, Greg, I paid for your college education. I've got your glitter right here, yo ingrate. And another thing ... oww, geez, somebody just shot me right through the torso! Ow ... maybe I can hide behind this mushroom. ARRGGHH!



Completely unrelated, but always appreciated — Pam!

THE RACES ARE ALIGNING.
THE ARMIES ARE GATHERING.
THE APOCALYPSE IS APPROACHING.

AND PEACE IS CURLED UP IN THE FETAL POSITION, WHIMPERING.

"IT LOOKS LIKE TURN-BASED STRATEGY GAMING IS ABOUT TO GET A SHOT IN THE ARM...IT WILL HELP SOLIDIFY AND STRENGTHEN THE GENRE." - IGNPC.COM

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The wise ones have seen an omen of doom in the form of a star in the night sky. The age of peace has officially been bludgeoned to death. The elfin court lies in ruin, and two factions have emerged. Battle flags have been raised, and silence has enveloped the land. This is the calm before the storm. You cannot choose to avoid the apocalyptic battle that looms on the horizon. Hatred and the need for revenge have a very long shelf life. Go to <http://pcxl.ign.com/gaming411>: Product Number 98



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PLUS 1 MORE AT GREAT SAVINGS!

Three Game of the Year award boxes are stacked vertically. The top box is for Half-Life 2, featuring the Lambda symbol and a portrait of Gordon Freeman. The middle box is for Dragon Age: Origins, showing a dragon and a knight. The bottom box is for StarCraft, featuring a Zergling and the Blizzard logo. A yellow 'GAME OF THE YEAR' seal is visible on the bottom right of the StarCraft box.

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Delta Force Action Game, Pentium3, 32mb	\$207195	Austin Powers: Operation Tropic Game Show/ Tropic, Pentium3, 16mb	\$207101
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Peter Jacobson's Golden Tee Golf Action Game, W.C., Pentium3, 16mb	\$205438	HomePlex Knight Mysteries: Limited Edition Adventure	\$186101
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All selections are available for PC only. Unless otherwise indicated, minimum system requirements are Windows 95 operating system, a 486/66 processor with 8MB RAM, VGA display, sound card, 200 MB hard drive, 4X CD-ROM drive, mouse, and keyboard. DOS files will run in Windows 95 DOS mode. Where indicated, J=Joystick, P=Printer, Pent=Pentium, and WC=Windows 95 Compatible selection.

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**I wasn't even planning
on buying it at first ...**

just picked it up during a lunch break ...

it scares me how close I came to never experiencing it.

**For the first time in a few years, I was really entertained ...
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- R. Janchan

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-- Goethe

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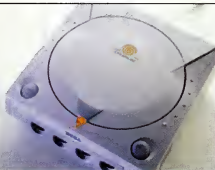
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FIRST PERSON

10 Things To Do With Your New Dreamcast

So you got caught up in the hype and actually purchased a new Sega Dreamcast? Well, congratulations, you've just become the proud owner of a PC without the RAM, resolution, Microsoft Word, fancy Photoshop apps for downloaded porn filtering, or any first-person shooter. 9/9/99 produced a record breaking \$97 million dollars in U.S. hardware and software sales — a record in gaming and the entertainment world (opening day for *Episode One* only did \$28 million). So which one of you schmoees actually went out and paid \$200 for this white box of ass? Well, if you were unfortunate enough to pick up the poorly titled, ill conceived console, then I've got a few suggestions:



Hard to believe this thing made more money than *Episode 1*'s opening, huh?

7: Go online and try to navigate through www.lipsticklesbians.com without a mouse and keyboard — good luck!

6: A year from now, when the graphics start to look real old, just plug in that new 3D card and some more RAM — oh wait, you can't do that. Scratch that. In a year, when the graphics start to look real old, don't say I didn't tell you so.

5: Buy that snazzy fishing reel controller and a six-pack of Hamm's. Invite over a flannel-wearing friend without teeth. Proceed to get smashed and say pervy things about your sister.

4: Go online and battle against all the other millions of Dreamcast owners in a thrilling game of *A-Troin III*. Now there's some entertainment!

3: Get extremely bored of an endless stream of Japanese fighting games (about one week), confused by big-headed Japanese RPGs (already happening, isn't it?), and pissed at depthless sports games (four games into a single-player season). Now stick the machine in your closet and wait for the potential of PlayStation 2 to be unveiled. Use the dusty Dreamcast to save \$100 off the PlayStation 2, then call and thank me personally.

2: Return your Dreamy crap to EB and use credits to buy games that require thinking and twitching. And if you **MUST** play Dreamcast games (although I don't know why), simply wait for the illegal emulators to start cropping up.

1: Put the thing in the trunk of your Etzel with the Betamax, Laser Disc player, Atari Jaguar, and 32X, and brag to friends that you are an "opinion maker."

10: Play the hell out of *Reedy 2 Rumble*, *Soul Coliber*, and *NFL 2K* (the only decent games of the bunch). Then wait two years for Sega to finish *Shenmue* (which, from what I've seen, is nothing more than a prettified *Dragon's Lair*).

9: Play *Mortal Kombat Gold* and relive rebellious pimply days with your loser friends.

8: Draw a picture of Sonic on the machine, then sell it on eBay for \$500 as a collector's edition Dreamcast.

SECOND PERSON

Hey, who's going to argue that the PC is the number one gaming platform, and the Dreamcast ain't gonna cut it for the long term? Doh. But give it a break. Wasn't everyone decrying the N64 when it came out, yet *Zelda 64* alone made it worth buying. *NFL 2K* for Dreamcast could likely do the same. Like it or not, ya gotta hand it to some of those polygon-pushing processors encased in the console boxes — they can fly like the wind in some games. While the PC is certainly catching up, sports and fighting games are both better on consoles, be it DC or the hot potential of the PSX2. So don't be so damn obtuse, yes, that's right, obtuse, about Sega's little baby. And please Mr. Sega, can I have one?

— ROB SMITH

— MIKE SALMON

NEXT MONTH?

XXX-MAS

EVERY DAMN GAME IN DEVELOPMENT

You read that right. In the course of living the international jet-setting lifestyle of a PCXL editor, we actually took notice of the games currently being created in the furthest-flung reaches of globe. We're gonna give you the skinny on everything that's going on out there in development land — including the surprises, the rumors, and a list of games we wish weren't in development.



FROM COAL TO AN HOUR WITH JERI RYAN
PCXL examines the gamut of potential gifts for the gamer, from a lump of coal to an hour with Jeri Ryan. This trip down gift lane covers the hottest games you want to find under the tree, plus the gadgets, gizmos, and other sundry stuff that you want to have just 'cause you're a selfish bastard.

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS
We share our most personal and thought-provoking resolutions for the new millennium. We'll resolve to run less pointless stories to avoid working, to save the company money and not drink on the job, and to stop harassing poor PR girls pushing their wares. Actually, what we'll probably do is just run more pictures of babes (like the ones below) and forget the whole thing. Happy New Year!





SITTING IN FRONT OF MY COMPUTER SHOULD QUALIFY AS AN EXTREME SPORT.



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- 2X AGP 8MB ATI RAGE Mobility™-P 3D Video
- 3D Positional Sound with Wavetable
- Internal PCI 56K Capable™ v.90 Fax Modem

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- Deluxe Nylon Carrying Case, add \$39

NEW DELL® INSPIRON™ 3700 Notebook

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- 64MB SDRAM ■ 4.8GB* Ultra ATA Hard Drive
- Modular 24X Max* Variable CD-ROM
- 2X AGP 8MB ATI RAGE Mobility™-M1 3D Video
- 3D Positional Sound with Wavetable
- 56K Capable™ v.90 WinModem PC Card with XJACK
- NEW 1-Year DellNet™ Internet Access™ with 20MB of Online Backup™
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Dell Recommended Upgrade:

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- Hasbro Interactive Family Gaming Bundle,™ add \$79
- HP® DeskJet® 895, add \$299

NEW DELL® INSPIRON™ 3700 Notebook

Lightweight, Light Price

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- Modular 24X Max* Variable CD-ROM
- 2X AGP 8MB ATI RAGE Mobility™-M1 3D Video
- 3D Positional Sound with Wavetable

\$1999 \$60/Mo., 48 Month Purchase Plan†
E-VALUE CODE: 89325-801019

Dell Recommended Upgrade:

- 56K Capable™ v.90 WinModem PC Card with XJACK
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All Inspiron Notebooks include: MS Works Suite 99 Software

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Cutting Edge Performance

- Intel® Pentium® III Processor at 600MHz ■ 512KB Integrated L2 Cache
- 64MB PC800 SDRAM ■ 13.6GB* Ultra ATA Hard Drive (7200 RPM)
- 17" (16.0" viewable, .26dp) M780 Monitor
- NEW 32MB NVIDIA TNT2 M64 4X AGP Graphics
- NEW 8X Max* Variable DVD-ROM Drive
- FREE Upgrade to NEW SB Live! Value Digital with MusicMatch Jukebox Enhanced software offer
- harman/kardon HK-195 Speakers
- 3Com® USRobotics v90 PCI Telephony WinModem**
- NEW 1-Year Dellnet™ Internet Access** with 20MB of Online Backup*

\$2199 \$56/Mo., 48 Month Purchase Plan*
E-VALUE CODE: 89325-501021a

Dell Recommended Upgrade:

- NEW Microsoft Natural Keyboard Pro, Dell Edition
 - Sony 4x24x24 CD-RW Drive ■ Altec Lansing ACS-340 Speakers with Subwoofer
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Cutting Edge Performance

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- 17" (16.0" viewable, .26dp) M780 Monitor
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- NEW 48X Max* Variable CD-ROM Drive
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- 3Com® USRobotics v90 PCI Telephony WinModem**
- NEW 1-Year Dellnet™ Internet Access** with 20MB of Online Backup*

\$1799 \$54/Mo., 48 Month Purchase Plan*
E-VALUE CODE: 89325-501017

Dell Recommended Upgrade:

- NEW 32MB Diamond Viper 7700 NVIDIA "Ultra" 4X AGP Graphics Card
 - NEW 8X Max* Variable DVD-ROM Drive
 - 100MB Zip Drive with One Disk
- Add \$279 E-VALUE CODE: 89325-501020u

DELL® DIMENSION® XPS T450

High Performance, Great Value

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- 40X Max* Variable CD-ROM Drive
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- harman/kardon HK-195 Speakers
- v90 PCI DataFax Modem*
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\$1299 \$39/Mo., 48 Month Purchase Plan*
E-VALUE CODE: 89325-501012

Dell Recommended Upgrade:

- 32MB Diamond Viper 7700 NVIDIA AGP Graphics
 - Turtle Beach Montego II A3D™ 320V Sound Card
 - NEW Harman Kardon HK-595 Surround Sound Speakers with Subwoofer
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Affordable Desktop Solution

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- SoundBlaster 64V PCI Sound Card
- harman/kardon HK-195 Speakers
- v90 PCI DataFax Modem*
- NEW 1-Year Dellnet™ Internet Access** with 20MB of Online Backup*

\$899 \$27/Mo., 48 Month Purchase Plan*
E-VALUE CODE: 89325-501008

Dell Recommended Upgrade:

- 64MB 100MHz SDRAM
 - 6.4GB* Ultra ATA Hard Drive
 - 17" (16.0" viewable, .26dp) M780 Monitor
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